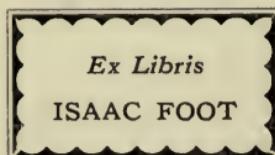






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## NOTES ON THE MARGINS

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# Notes on the Margins

*Being Suggestions of Thought  
and Enquiry*

*Five Essays by*

CLIFFORD HARRISON  
111

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## PREFACE

I HAVE attempted no particular sequence in these papers. They are placed very much as they were written, and they were written as the subjects suggested themselves, or were suggested to me. The subjects themselves would seem to have but little in common. Yet in their treatment they have a common point of view from which they gain a certain aspect of unity; and in their aim and drift they consciously tend to a common issue, which, I think, gives to them, if not a harmony, at least an undiscordant cadence of thought.

Many of us in these days are deeply interested alike in philosophy, in science, and in theology; but it may be our interest centres not so much in the scholastic and separate walks of each, technically considered, as in that less trodden line of mystic thought which, whilst it claims to include all, is in itself expressed by none.

It is unnecessary for me to put in a word of apology for my venturesomeness, or to present a petition for merciful judgment to the Powers that be in all the great schools I have named, or to those professed mystic thinkers who rule the line of thought on

which these essays are drawn; for I am entirely conscious that the honour of counting them amongst my readers is not likely to fall to my portion. Nor, indeed, do I in one sense desire such honour, inasmuch as the essays were written with very different purpose. It is rather to the many who form the laity to these august orders I would desire to speak, as it is of their kindly consideration I am solicitous. We laity it is who form the audiences, the congregations, and the readers in lecture-room, church, and study. We it is who so often come away with much additional information and scant additional satisfaction. To quote Omar Khäyaàm's words with present and personal application, we

“. . . do eagerly frequent  
Doctor and saint, and hear great argument  
About it and about: and evermore  
Come out by the same door where in we went.”

Sometimes we like to speak to one another when we have closed our book, or come out from lecture or from service—speak to one another in spoken word, if it may be: if not, then in that printed page which nowadays is almost as much a general heritage as speech.

Such a page, however, must start with a full and plain confession of how it is written and for whom. I will, therefore, at once say that the following essays are in nowise written for those who are adepts, or even advanced students, in the subjects

dealt with. Volumes which please and interest the initiated in any subject are oftentimes too technical for the casual reader. In all subjects of mystic thought—such as are herein glanced at—this is peculiarly true. Most books which are written for mystics are scarcely to be understood by any one who is not instructed in mystic thought; and some of them are even purposely unintelligible to the outside reader. The aim of the following essays is merely to suggest, and to point to enquiry. They claim to be nothing more than Notes on the Margins of the thought with which they deal.



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AN  
ENQUIRY INTO MYSTICISM

“Heaven and earth are united together, and the universe is one.”—*Chinese Inscription of 133 A.D., discovered in the Valley of the Orkhan.*

“Religion without proof and science without hope are standing face to face in a defiance without hope of victory for either side.”—ÉDOUARD SCHÜRÉ, *Les Grands Initiés.*

“To me, I confess, nothing seems more delightful than to be able to discover how, by an unbroken chain, our thoughts and words carry us back from century to century, how the roots and feeders of our minds pierce through stratum after stratum, and still draw their life and nourishment from the deepest foundations, from the hearts of the oldest thinkers of mankind.”—MAX MÜLLER, *Theosophy, or Psychological Religion.*

“. . . But, friends,  
Faith is within ourselves. It takes no rise  
From outside things, whate'er you may believe.  
There is an inmost centre in us all,  
Where truth abides in fulness: and around,  
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,  
This perfect clear perception—which is truth:—  
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh  
Binds it, and makes it error: and to KNOW  
Rather consists in opening out a way  
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,  
Than in effecting entry for a light  
Supposed to be without.”

—BROWNING, *Paracelsus.*

# I

## AN ENQUIRY INTO MYSTICISM

### I

THERE is in the world around us a system of thought, known in full only to those by whom it is followed, and followed but by few, for which it is difficult to find a name at once appropriate and acceptable. Names there are, indeed, and many, for the various branches and subdivisions of this wide system of thought. But few of the names are satisfactory for the whole system; many of them would be repudiated by the students of the thought so designated; and most of them seem to be coined by the outside world, and bestowed on a line of thought it avowedly does not pretend to like and scarcely tries to understand. The best of these names, in some ways—best, because when it was first used it was clear in its real meaning, and was made and accepted by those who followed the study they thus designated—is Theosophy. Yet here we find a fine and noble word, of sublime

origin and meaning, sadly hampered by technical claims, by modern misapplication, and by much not unwarrantable prejudice.

Professor Max Müller (who must be allowed to be a master of words) chooses this name, however, to head his Gifford Lectures on many of the various forms of religious faith which go to make up—or rather, are fused in—the system of thought to which I have alluded. “It seemed to me,” he writes, “that this venerable name, so well known among early Christian thinkers, as expressing the highest knowledge of God within the human mind, has of late been so greatly misappropriated that it was high time to restore it to its proper function.” We may note, therefore, in passing, that whatever may be our private feeling or association with regard to this name as it figures in the world before us to-day, the word itself originally held, and still holds in the mind of the impartial scholar and observer, a very high meaning—a meaning, indeed, nothing short of the highest any word can hold when applied to the pursuit of knowledge. Professor Max Müller further defines this system of thought, in so far as he deals with it in these lectures, as “Psychological Religion.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He adds: “I shall not be able to avoid these names (psychic, theosophic, and mystic) altogether, because the most prominent representatives of Theosophy and mystic religion have prided themselves on these names, and they are very appropriate, if only clearly defined. Nothing, of course, is easier, and therefore in

But perhaps the two names by which it is best known in the world at large and in the history of religion or ethics are—Occultism and Mysticism. Of these, the latter seems to be by far the better. We must own that both names come to us in “such a questionable shape,” that they present to the ordinary observer a somewhat spectral appearance, not wholly unassociated with midnight and a ghost. In that they both alike hint at something hidden—a mystery—they may be considered true names. But in that they both seem shrouded with an unpleasant if not malefic darkness, as of some sinister secret—a suspicion, as it were, of enigmatical and thaumaturgical hocus-pocus—a shadow (shall we say?) of Black Art—they are untrue and detectable forgeries of the real but unknown signature. In the first-named, *Occultism*, this unbenignant gloom seems—at least to the outsider—painfully and perturbingly present. The argument which would try to explain this gloom away would be a sophistry and a bit of special pleading. It is well, indeed, at once to confess that the shadow is no adumbration of prejudice and ignorance, but is a fact—although it may be cast by something far removed from the unsubstantial bogie of popular fancy and prejudice.

certain minds more tempting, than to use the same word in its opprobrious sense, and thus, by a mere name, to condemn doctrines which have been held by the wisest and best of men. This kind of criticism need not detain us, or keep us from adopting the name of Theosophy for our own purposes.”

Nor, in confessing the presence of this shadow, is any unusual feature in a great subject introduced, or any condemnation of it involved, if we will only impartially consider the matter. Everything in the world, every thought presented to it, every force known, even every "virtue" practised, has its two poles, its positive and negative. To allow that there is a dark, nay, a very dark side to this system of thought, is but crediting it with the order which obtains throughout the world. Our planet is the great type of all we know, and all, in a sense, we are ; and it has for ever a dark as well as a bright side.

We observe further that the dark side has, so to speak, a more obvious result, from the earthly point of view, than the sun-lighted hemisphere ; for it casts far into the atmosphere the double triangles of the umbra and the penumbra. We do not blame the light for causing the correlative shadow, nor do we arraign the globe which receives the light for the evil of intercepting it. That inevitable darkness which attends a sunlit sphere is one of the planetary conditions which will be found to be archetypal of every condition in our life and every system of our thought. Night is the corollary of Day ; "Evil" the correlation of "Good." When *Yes* is spoken, *No* is predicated. Every virtue has its inversive vice. Religion is not less honoured or less blessed because it has had, and always must have, a reverse side of gross superstition and black

fanaticism. That the higher the nature is, the deeper may be its fall, is a proverbial truth. When manifestation is once accorded, limitation is involved. The Son of the Morning becomes, in other aspects, the Prince of Darkness. It is unnecessary to press further an analogy that is admitted by philosophy and natural intelligence, or to quote the final and highest exemplars conceivable to the mind and within reach of the spiritual perception, to prove this omnipresent Positive and Negative.

In a certain form of Occultism (and this is the form generally associated with the word in the popular mind), no one can deny that we meet the shadowed and inversive side of the system of thought of which I speak. This shadow is so terrible (to no one so terrible as to the true Mystic), and, from causes easy to perceive, when once we think of the matter—causes which every preacher admits with reiteration, and every philosopher faces with interrogation—is likely to be so much better known and understood by the world than the sun-brightened surface that corresponds to it, that it is not surprising that many of the pious, the wise, and the pure turn from the whole system which they associate almost exclusively with this shadow. The ignorance in the world, even in the world of thought and religion, about the brighter side of this system is so extraordinary, that it parallels with a surprising and startling exactness the innumerable passages in the

sacred writings which proclaim and mourn over the ignorance, natural and wilful, of mankind as to the things that make for the higher life. The dark side of the system is, then, the one that is best known—to very many the only one known. The depth of its darkness cannot be overrated or exaggerated. No one would hold that darkness so appalling as those who walk in the hemisphere of light, which, as it were, causes that shadow. They indeed alone know to the full (if such a phrase be permissible for knowledge which at best is but infinitely small) all its danger and horror.

To the outside observer, attracted by matters called "occult" and "psychical," nay, even to the thoughtful and cold observer, bent on examining an interesting study, a strange exhibition of unknown or but partially known forces of matter, of will, or of credulity, the initial steps toward and into this shadow are often very seductive—a fascinating amusement—a subject for after-dinner discussion, and of experiment to be undertaken lightly or scoffingly, with a not wholly disagreeable titillation of nerves brought into contact with something a little uncanny. But to any one who knows where the lines may lead, and what force may be unloosed by thoughtless or by self-seeking curiosity, these steps are dangerous to a point that can scarcely be put into words without incurring the charge of extravagant and theatrical hyperbole. Yet the words so

used might well be justified by accepted parallels well known at least to the Churches. We must again remember that every study or pursuit which is open to man, be it for knowledge or happiness, has its reverse side. Science can be as black with cruelty in its ruthless search for knowledge—(using in that search the very dictum it so execrates in the Mediæval Church, that the end justifies the means)—and can be as hard in its dogma as any superstition. It is excusable on this point to repeat that the “Black Art” and gross abyss to which occultism can sink, and has often sunk in the past, is no individual or unique danger and feature of this particular study. It is but a parallel to the order of the earth and man’s life thereon.

If the system of thought to which I refer be indeed the high one it claims to be, it should be no matter of surprise that the road is one of difficulty and danger. There is a Chinese phrase which warns the disciple in this school of wisdom that he will have “to walk the knife-edge.” It is fair, therefore, to recognise the fact that the manifold dangers which beset the path of such a disciple are fully known and fully admitted—even emphasised—by those who point the way. Indeed, it is probable that the beginner will think the dangers are over-accentuated and paraded by those who lead his steps. It is not until he has progressed some distance on the way that he begins to perceive that no emphasis

can be too great for such grave and ever-present dangers.

Yet the impartial observer can scarcely find this to be a flaw on a professedly spiritual system, or adduce it as a reason for condemnation and withdrawal. He will recall the innumerable words in which every religion and faith warns its followers of the dangers to be encountered. He will recollect the mysterious and lurid images of gloom and terror which find their places in the Scriptures best known to Western thought—those terrific symbolisms of Doom and Fall which perplex and affright the timid and rouse the anger or scorn of the incredulous. The analogies thus created will, at least, compel him to admit that in this matter all the systems of spiritual thought are characterised not by distinctions but by likeness, and that all repeat in some form or other the mystery of a world that gives us darkness and light, and a human nature whose highest blessing is found in the exaltation of a natural passion, which, when turned toward degradation, forms its deepest curse.

So much may be briefly and at once conceded to the forbidding features we discern so clearly in the shadowy name of Occultism. Therefore it is that the word does not seem desirable, at least in the world at large, as the name for the whole system. It misrepresents the subject to the general enquirer.

And for the whole sphere of thought—that which

is turned toward the sun as well as that which lies in the shadow of itself—what name shall we give to it? The passage I have quoted from Professor Max Müller's Gifford Lectures for 1892 points to the misused *Theosophy* as the best word. But, whilst sharing in no prejudice against it, I think it is not sufficiently wide. At its best it has the limitations which go with its Greek derivation. These give the word historical and geographical complexion and locality. Ancient Egypt, India, Persia, Assyria, not to speak of civilisations which trend away into the mythic dawn of our race, are unrepresented in a word that savours unmistakably of Neo-Platonist Alexandria and the Early Christian Church. We find, after all, but one word that in any way suits the need, though it in no way fills it, and that word is *Mysticism*. Here, at least, is a word that should be held to be unlocalised and of no epoch—a word that surely should be of limitless interpretation—a word, too, that is known to scholars, and stamped in their vocabulary with a mysterious but yet beneficent meaning. It is also more liberated from that over-plentiful measure of shadow which encompasses *Occultism*.

Many of the saints and Fathers of the Church—divines as well known and loved as Tauler, Eckhart, and Suso—people as modern and reassuring to the ear as Madame Guyon and Rousseau, Leibnitz and Schopenhauer, are acknowledged to be mystical

in their writings. Such examples, not to mention others which might instantly be quoted—examples honoured of all and above the suspicion of anything dark and turgid—should free the name of Mystic from the disconcerting shadow with which some people are minded to invest it. It is curious to the open-minded enquirer to note how partial and unfair the world is in its judgments on points which demand that attitude of mind which the Church exalts when it asks a hearing for the petition that our judges may “truly and *indifferently* administer justice.” The folks who plead thus for a special section of the community are too apt to indulge in a lavish differentiation in administering their own judgments. The mystic is thus often condemned for his mysticism by people who complacently read works of theology, books and poems, parables and passages of Scripture, which are nothing if not mystical. It involves no theological heresy, I suppose, to assert that the only possible interpretation of very many passages in the Bible, and the only probable one of certain whole books therein, is a mystical one.

The most sacred service the Church knows is distinctly spoken of as a “mystery,” and even as “holy mysteries.” Yet thousands out of the congregations who fill our churches—nay, may one not say thousands of the priests who minister in the churches?—are ignorant in reality of the mystical position

and interpretation of the religious symbols and customs and of the Scriptures, and exclude all thought of real, present, revealed but veiled, mystery from the system they represent and confess,—save in a few verbal confessions of its existence in the central thoughts of Life and Death, and in a general vague sense of spiritual truth? “The mystic philosophers are very little read by our scholars,” wrote Charles Kingsley, “and read not for, but in spite of their mysticism; and our popular theology has so completely rid itself of any mystic elements, that our divines look with utter disfavour upon it, use the word always as a term of opprobrium, and interpret the mystic expressions in our Liturgy—which mostly occur in the Collects—according to the philosophy of Locke, really ignorant, it would seem, that they were written by Platonist mystics. . . . Christians here in England are more puzzled by those utterances of St. John, which mystics have always claimed as justifying their theories, than by any part of their Bibles.”<sup>1</sup> This statement in great measure still holds good. There is a strange and wholly unreasonable discountenance and fear of mystic thought amongst many of those who cling without fear to the “mysteries” of religion, and who like the aspects of those mysteries which they habitually encounter. Still the fact that the words *mystic* and *mystery* have been so accepted by all true

<sup>1</sup> *Literary and General Essays.*

spiritual thought, and are beyond repudiation a part of the necessary vocabulary of all true thought of life, render the name of *Mysticism*, unhampered by technical meaning, the most appropriate that can be used to describe the system of thought of which I write.

It is not my purpose to attempt to describe *Mysticism* in any of its forms. To one who had slight knowledge of the subject it would seem to be an impossible task, and to one who had sufficient knowledge to undertake it, it would assuredly be a rejected one. Any one who is interested can examine and study mystic thought on its many lines, since they are, in a sense, open to all. Prejudice must be utterly put aside, and although unwavering personal judgment must never be yielded up (since for each there is the individual path), criticism and opposition must be withheld.

In reading on this subject, it should be never forgotten that every age has its own limitations and its own spirit and fault. The limitations must not narrow the vision, nor the faults, even when gross and glaring, alienate and repel the mind. Few books and writers on these subjects will be found wholly acceptable or satisfying; many will be found to be puzzling and antipathetic; but all can help, and by each something may be learnt. The great Lord Bacon had trodden the way, and his advice on this point is wise with experimental

wisdom. He says: "Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider." If the study be not fitted to the enquirer, nor he be ready for it, it will, beyond question, seem but a stumbling-block and a foolishness. We do not always see a thing when we look at it. Most people, doubtless, have had moments of sight and vision for things they had often looked at and never seen before. Emerson has a fine passage about that. "Our eyes are holden," he says, "that we cannot see things that stare us in the face, until the hour arrives when the mind is ripened; then we behold them, and the time when we saw them not is like a dream." This is pre-eminently true of Mysticism. Many people examine it, and look at it, and write about it, who never have seen it, and never have realised what it is. All such things, if they be what they claim to be, are "spiritually discerned."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The mystic, as I understand his position, holds that all spiritual matters, call them by what name we may, of any sort or kind, of any age or place, are of the spirit spiritual, and cannot be seen with corporeal or mental sight. Those who do not possess the spiritual sight (and we have to gain it) simply do not and cannot see spiritual truth. They are not so much spiritually blind as eyeless. The organs of that vision are non-existent. You might as well show an object to a blind man, and say, "See this," as a spiritual truth to one who is only an intellectual man, however grand and elevated his intelligence may be, however wide and profound his information. The spirit, let it be remembered, is, in this belief, not a *natural* part of man. The "Adam" who became at last "a living soul" was the human animal Man before he received the Divine Breath. This was the spirit, the inspired

Without *that* power of vision there will be no sight.

But although I would attempt neither description nor criticism of so complex and profound a system

Breath. Naturally Man has no spirit. He may be "an immortal soul," there being a part of him that may not die with the mortal frame; but this is not spirit. Spirit is the mysterious New Birth. It will be found that this idea is in no real way at variance with the accepted truths of spiritual life, however much it is with the popular interpretation of them. The natural man is held to be composed of Body, Mind, and Soul. The Body and Mind are "mortal." The Soul reincarnates again and again. Our vague thought has lost the subtle distinctions, and uses the words *soul* and *spirit* as identical and interchangeable. In our translation of the Hebrew and Greek writings of our Scriptures the words "soul," "spirit," "breath," are vaguely employed. But in mysticism we find that the spirit is held to be a New Birth for man. It is to man what the origin of life is in protoplasm. The natural life of man on this planet may be, as it were, the protoplasm for the New Life, immortality in the flesh. This mystery, when realised, makes many mysteries comprehensible, and much that is dark full of meaning. This is the being "born again" spoken of by the Christ of the Gospels. This is the mystic birth of the Divine Child in the manger of the body, amongst the animals (the passions and natural functions), the eternal Nativity that is always true. This is the "soul" (the word is vaguely used, as has been said), to "lose" which (*i.e.*, not "gain") is a loss not to be compensated by the "gain" of "the whole world," with all its pride of life and wisdom. This it is which explains why an ignorant peasant may be a child of light, and a great scholar and world-crowned man a child of this world only. This it is which makes the Natural Man into the Man Regenerate, the Son of Man, the Son of God. Where this Second Birth is given (it cannot be achieved save by the mystery of growth) there is the advance to higher life. Such, at least as I read it, is the belief of the mystic. And it will be seen that this in no way is touched by the controversial arguments any more than it is seriously taken into the cognisance of the ordinary opponent of religion or of the man of scientific acumen and knowledge.

as that presented by Mysticism, a brief survey of some of the outward aspects it presents to an unbiased enquirer may not be wholly uninteresting.

## II

At the outset of any enquiry into this subject, we cannot fail to be struck by the curious disparity of statement as to the meaning of Mysticism which meets us in the writings of those who have approached the subject critically and from the outside. The word is very casually dealt with by many otherwise accurate writers. The only meaning that seems by common consent placed on it is that of a Mystery. Now, if the old meaning of that word be remembered, a meaning enshrined in the holiest office of the Christian Church, we shall at once perceive its truest aspect. But most people are very ignorant or very oblivious of this meaning, and the general definition of the word would be either a something of shadowy substance, phantasmal and vague, or an insoluble enigma.

After we accept and pass beyond this popular but unsatisfactory reading of the word, and enquire of the more thoughtful what further signification of Mysticism they can offer, we meet a strange diversity and divergence of opinion. The statements of those who examine the subject from without are contradictory, whilst the explanatory testimony from

within is slight. Even the writings of professed mystics seldom give us more than a passing glimpse into some special attitude or department of mystic thought. Few men, even the greatest, rise above the limitations of their age. All of which limitations, though dear and helpful to the scholar and to the world at large, as giving form and definiteness to a subject where both seem often lacking, are strangely out of keeping with the universality of thought and outlook which should be comprehended by the wider Mysticism. Thus we can, without much difficulty, find learned and valuable pages about the Hindoo mystics, the Vedic and Vedântic philosophies, and the Gymnosophists of India; the Hierophants and adepts of the Hermetic Fraternities of Egypt and the mysteries of Isis; the Magi, the Zoroastrians, and the mysticism of the Gâthas and the Avesta in Persia; the Essenes and mystics of Judæa; the Sûfis and the mysteries of Islam; the mysteries of Orpheus and Dionysos; the Eleatics, Pythagoreans, and Platonists of Greece; the Neo-Platonists of Alexandria, and their fusion of Classic, Semitic, and Christian thought; the Kabbalists and Talmudists; the Areopagitê, and the Theosophists and Gnostics of the early Christian era; the Albigenses and the Waldenses; the Templars and strangely mysterious societies of the Middle Ages; the Rosicrucians and Alchemists; the Pietists and Quietists, and the Mystics of the Chnrch; the German

Mystics; the strong drift toward many forms of Mysticism, dark as well as bright, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; French Encyclopédistes and Bavarian Illuminati; till we come to the sects which have represented various phases of Mystic thought in our own land and in the last two centuries; Swedenborgians, the Early Quakers, the Cambridge Platonists—all the innumerable expressions of the spirit, ever changing in form, but always one in essence, of Mysticism.

Now it is evident that such a literature as even this imperfect list implies demands an area of information of which few scholars, even of the ripest and best, could boast. Scholars there are, indeed, whose studies have led them over many of the sections of this area, and whose knowledge of some of the sections is profound and exhaustive. We have amongst us now many such scholars. Yet the mind at once apprehends the important truth that the central idea of Mysticism, the secret and knowledge which Mysticism at once reveals and veils, is something which is not realised and understood intellectually and by the brain, but experimentally by an inward spirit; and that its true history and expression in the world is not to be gained by a study, however laborious and exact, of its chronicles, or of any special department, or even departments, of mystic thought: but by a reception, intuitive rather than instructed, of the whole area of thought

that is presented to the mind in a retrospect such as that I have suggested.

In a writer so brilliant and imaginative as De Quincey one might reasonably expect some insight into such a subject as Mysticism. In his essay on "Secret Societies" he deals with many of the great mystic fraternities, ancient and mediaeval. The sublimity of the idea he is contemplating attracts him strongly, and he confesses the curious and sombre interest with which he approached the subject in an opening passage of remarkable power.<sup>1</sup> But it is evident from the subsequent pages of the essay that, although his imagination was captivated by what appeared to him the dramatic, not to say melodramatic, *pose* of secret societies, as they are pictured by the world, neither his information nor his intuition had ever in any way realised the true concept of these same mysterious secret societies, the idea round which they moved, the quest on which they were bent, or the language they adopted.

<sup>1</sup> "Every adult will and must, if at all by nature meditative, regard with a feeling higher than vulgar curiosity small fraternities of men forming themselves in separate and inner vortices within the great vortex of society, communicating silently in broad daylight by signals not even seen, or, if seen, not understood, except among themselves, and connected by the link either of purposes not safe to be avowed, or by the grander link of awful truths which, merely to shelter themselves from the hostility of an age unprepared for their reception, are forced to retire, possibly for generations, behind thick curtains of secrecy. To be hidden amidst crowds is sublime; to come down hidden amongst crowds from distant generations is doubly sublime."

He criticises a something he only knows by hearsay and from books. The attitude of mind he adopts closes the doors he thinks he is opening. He is fatally intelligent. He is also depressingly arch. Humour is a gift of the gods, and is welcome even in the most solemn courts of spiritual teaching; but quizzing is not humour, and the humour in "Secret Societies" is of the quizzing order. The distinguished writer is never for a moment willing to struggle for what Mr. Benjamin Kidd delightfully calls "the subordination of his own reason." The essay is—to some of us, at least—a strong appeal, even in its condemnations, for the hidden but vital meanings of the societies it makes merry over. And the suspicion that the secret of these secret societies has been indeed so well kept, and veiled from the scrutiny of the merely intellectually curious, that even a well-informed and brilliant mind like De Quincey's failed to extract or read it, adds perceptibly to the grandeur of a conception which he himself owns at the outset is "sublime."

We may take another illustrious instance of narrow criticism on this matter. John Stuart Mill tells us all about the tangled meanings of Mysticism. "Mysticism," he says, "is neither more nor less than ascribing objective existence to the subjective creations of the mind, and believing that by watching and contemplating these ideas of its own making, it can read what takes place in the world without."

This statement begins better than it ends. The opening words strike the same blow at a certain spurious form of mystic thought that is dealt even more effectively by John Addington Symonds in his "Greek Poets," when he says the Pythagoreans mistook "a power of the mind for a power inherent in the universe." But though there is a measure of truth in this argument, pointing out as it does a danger in Mystic thought, one can scarcely in reason allow that a system which has attracted such great and noble minds in all ages, and furthermore, which is always appealing to Nature and natural laws, and always finding the appeal honoured, is "neither more nor less" than a very unmysterious extension of personal vanity. But if the beginning of the definition shows a knowledge of a low form of mystic thought, the ending thereof exhibits a strange misapprehension. Surely the mystic seeks to read the world that is within him, rather than "what takes place in the world without." One fancies that the philosopher was centring his thought in this matter on the one aspect that is known as Spiritualism. Of a form of this strange cult John Stuart Mill's sentence makes the now-accepted scientific explanation. Indeed, of many phenomena which the world has accounted "spiritual"—not only in the séances of modern mediums, but in the "ghosts" and "spectres" of haunted houses, and even in the visions and ecstasies of the mediaeval

saints—the explanation he offers would be the credited scientific diagnosis.

But such an explanation deals only—even if it be accepted—with the phenomenal side of Mysticism, and this is but one side of the subject—a side I have no desire to speak about, and which may, with wisdom, be entirely disregarded. The vaster part of the subject remains untouched. He who, speaking or writing of Mysticism, begins with the phenomenal side of the subject, or infers that it is the principal one, reveals that he knows but little of the real matter.

Far removed from the spirit of the sentence I have quoted, is the testimony given directly from within the pale of Mysticism by one who had the right to speak—Jacob Boehme, the unlearned but illuminated cobbler of Alt Seidenburg. “Our whole doctrine is nothing else,” he says—(clearly foreseeing John Stuart Mill’s sentence)—“but an instruction to show how man may create a kingdom of light within himself. He in whom the spring of divine power flows carries within himself the divine image. . . . Not I, the I that I am, know these things, but God knows them in me.”

Charles Kingsley, who in all such matters knew and felt (and herein feeling is a kind of knowledge) more than many of his great contemporaries, says: “A mystic, according to the Greek etymology, should signify one who is initiated into mysteries,

one whose eyes are opened to see things which other people cannot see. And the true mystic, in all ages and countries, has believed that this was the case with him. He believes that there is an invisible world as well as a visible one—so do most men; but the mystic believes also that this same invisible world is not merely a supernumerary, one world more, over and above the earth on which he lives and the stars over his head, but that it is the cause of them and the ground of them; that it was the cause of them at first, and is the cause of them now, even to the budding of every flower and the falling of every pebble to the ground; and, therefore, that having been before this visible world, it will be after it, and endure, just as real, living, and eternal, though matter were annihilated to-morrow.”<sup>1</sup>

In the same essay the writer points out, with true insight, that Mysticism is no matter of vague dreams and impracticable theories. He puts it thus: “It is quite a mistake to suppose that Mysticism is by its very nature impracticable. . . . They are terribly practical people these mystics, quiet students and devotees as they may seem. They go, or seem to go, down to the roots of things, after a way of their own, and lay foundations on which—be they sound or unsound—those who come after them cannot choose but build as we are building now. . . . The greatest and most

<sup>1</sup> Hours with the Mystics: Literary and General Essays.

prosperous races of antiquity—the Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindoos, and Greeks—had the mystic element as strong and living in them as the Germans have now. Our forefathers were mystics in the forests of Germany and in the dales of Norway; they were mystics in the convents and universities of the Middle Ages; they were mystics, all the deepest and noblest minds of them, during the Elizabethan era.” This is a very striking testimony to a feature not only occasionally forgotten, but absolutely reversed in the popular idea of Mysticism. The dreariness and impracticability that is often associated with the mystic in the world’s judgment is due partly to the fact that Mysticism is generally judged by its *poseurs* more than by its initiates (who are often unknown by such character), and partly from the dark glass through which the subject is viewed. Vagueness of outline is the result of an imperfect medium and organ of sight quite as often as of an inherent indeterminateness of character in the thing under inspection.

Professor Max Müller, in the lectures of which I have already spoken, quotes a passage by Dr. Tholuck, which gives an exalted idea of the character and aim of the mystic,<sup>1</sup> but in it we note a repetition

<sup>1</sup> “A man who, conscious of an affinity with all that exists, from the Pleiades to the grain of dust, merged in the divine stream of life that pours through the universe, but perceiving also that the purest spring of God bursts forth in his own heart, moves onward across the world which is turned toward what is limited and finite,

of the thought of "self," which marks at once the strength and the weakness of such statements and studies. For in true Mysticism it would appear that self is the factor, the suppression or rather the transmutation of which is the turning-point of the system and the test of its truth. Mysticism seems to admit very few hard and fast lines, and but lightly esteems those arbitrary divisions of thought and life which the world and its schools hold so dear and valuable; but there is one line that it surely draws with an unfaltering hand across the universe, and it is given in the word Self. At that line the great scales are poised as it were between the light and the darkness, the black and the white. "Know thyself" seems written on the light; "Think of thyself," on the darkness—transfiguration of self on this side, glorification of self on the other.

Whilst on the subject of the various definitions of Mysticism, it is impossible not to name, in passing, a work which attracted a great deal of attention by its cleverness, and not a little amusement by

turning his eye in the centre of his own soul to the mysterious abyss where the infinite flows into the finite, satisfied in nameless intuition of the sanctuary opened within himself, and lighted up and embraced in a blissful love of the secret source of his own being. . . . In his moral aspect the life of such a mystic is like a mirror of water, moved by an all-powerful love within, and disquieted by desire, yet restraining the motion of its waves, in order to let the face of the sun reflect itself on a motionless surface. The restless conflicts of selfhood are quieted and restrained by love, so that the eternal may move freely in the motionless soul, and the life of the soul may be absorbed in the law of God."

its violence, "Degeneration," by Herr Max Nordau. Nearly two hundred of its pages are headed *Mysticism*, and these pages are divided into sections named respectively—*The Psychology of Mysticism*; *The Pre-Raphaelites*; *Symbolism*; *Tolstoism*; *The Richard Wagner Cult*; and *Parodies of Mysticism*. Of these six sections, the only one that deals with anything that can be accepted technically as *Mysticism* as it is, and always has been accepted in the world, is the last, and this touches it only on its lower plane. The five former sections present to the reader one long, energetic, often admirable, and occasionally unfair, attack on the various signs of the times, which, in the writer's judgment, exhibit the stigmata of degeneration by showing a tendency toward vague and formless thought, an excessive love of symbolism,<sup>1</sup> and some of the more elementary ideas of mystical thought. Many of these things must truly be taken as significant of a widespread unconscious movement toward the externals of *Mysticism*, but they cannot themselves be classed under that name. The learned doctor, however, in a fine frenzy of antagonism and righteous indignation, takes the word, and ties it on as a label to the whole seething heterogeneous mass. He then cries, "See how vile a thing is *Mysticism*! Away with it to the madhouse!"

<sup>1</sup> The real mystic, be it observed, generally penetrates to the things symbolised, and therefore requires no symbolism, signs, or formulæ of worship. The symbols are constructed for and given to the people.

But it is impossible to take Herr Max Nordau's Mysticism seriously, and when he gravely assures us that "Mysticism is the habitual condition of the human race, and in no way an eccentric disposition of mind," we at once perceive the mistake made. The first word of the sentence and the headings of the pages is a misprint. The word he wanted is derived from *misty* not *mystic*.

Yet even granting that he were right in describing Mysticism as a "condition of the human race," how different is his unimaginative and harsh judgment to the calm and profound vision of Schopenhauer. He, writing of mystical tenets and thoughts, says: "Nothing is more astonishing than the unanimity of all who profess these principles, notwithstanding the greatest diversity of age, country, and religion. They do not form a sect; indeed, they are mostly ignorant of each other's existence. The Indian, Christian, and the Mohammedan mystics, quietists, and ascetics are disparate in all things, only not in the *inner* spirit and meaning of their teachings. . . . So much concord among such divergent peoples and times is a practical proof that theirs is not a distorted and perverted state of mind, but the expression of an essential constituent of human nature, whose rarity is due solely to its excellence." Here, even when placing Mysticism as "an essential constituent of human nature," Schopenhauer allows its "rarity."

He therefore saw in it something very different to that muddle-headed mistiness to which the author of "Degeneration" drags down Mysticism—a chaotic state which, not untruly, he pronounces "the habitual condition of the human race."

A history of Mysticism would be, as I have said, a task of the gravest difficulty, demanding profound and exhaustive knowledge. It might even be said to be a useless task, in that in the deepest truth "every man is his own mystic." To materialise Mysticism into definite expression and concise history might be to lose its essence. In a sense it would be committing the fault pronounced by the mediæval alchemists to be the unforgivable sin, and defined in their half-symbolic, half-scientific phraseology as "solidifying the fluid." Mysticism is a growth. The name itself is a pillar of cloud and of fire. It leads and it baffles, according as we ourselves are placed with regard to it. This, however, may be said of all spiritual thought—almost of all great thought. And when we remember that the chosen language of Mysticism has always been one of parable and symbol, we perceive what difficulty a student, accustomed to exact and open expression and statement, must find in this subject. To it one may apply a sentence in Mr. Walter Pater's "Essay on Lacedæmonia."<sup>1</sup> "The whole life of the Lacedæmonian community," he says,

<sup>1</sup> *Plato and Platonism.*

“had a secluded, impenetrable, and secret character. You couldn’t really know it unless you were of it.” This seems exactly true of Mysticism. There is an inscription under the statue of Phtahmer, now in the museum of the Louvre, which runs thus: “There was nothing veiled for him, and he covered with a veil the essence of all that he had seen.” It might be inscribed anew under the names of all great mystics. Plato, in the *Symposium*, talks of “words which are ridiculous when you first hear them . . . (words) like the images of Silenus which open . . . so that an ignorant man who did not know him might feel disposed to laugh at him, but he who opens the mask and sees what is within will find that they are the only words which have a meaning in them, and also the most divine, abounding in fair examples of virtue and of the widest comprehension, or rather extending to the whole duty of a good and honourable man.” It would be hard to meet a more perfect description than that of the language of many mystical writers—especially those of Sûfism and the East. Plato, in another place, tells us that he wrote enigmatically, with a purpose, “that in case the tablet should have happened with any accident, either by land or sea, a person without some previous knowledge of the subject might not be able to understand its contents.” It is this use of cipher, of symbol, and of allegory, that has in many minds given rise to the

charge of vague dreaming and grotesque Kabbalism against the mystic.

Mysticism, it is evident, is peculiarly difficult to define. In a sense it escapes and eludes all definition. It is, perhaps, best described by an analogy, by the use of a symbol such as it loves in its own use. Let us say that Mysticism is to religion what Music is to languages. Music has been called "the universal speech of mankind."<sup>1</sup> Mysticism claims a like universality in the world of spiritual truth. Music defies definition and explanation, since philosophy, art, and science alike, one and all, own that they are baffled by its mystery. Mysticism has always crowned Music as divine—has sometimes associated itself with Harmony, and adopted the name and language of Music. We can scarcely do better than accept the analogy. Mysticism is in the world of thought what Music is in the world of sound.

### III.

The phenomenal, miraculous, or what is called "supernatural" aspect of this system of thought has been admitted. But in the admission the aspect was relegated to the darker and lower planes—to the dark and shadowed side of Mysticism. It is, however, necessary for a truthful survey of the subject to own that this aspect appears also in the

<sup>1</sup> Weber.

bright and beneficent aspect—in the development as well as the deterioration. Theology has preserved the same mystery in her documents and beliefs. There is always a White as well as a Black Magic. Many parallels in our Bible will occur to the mind. There is the sorcerer, and there is the adept, and both work marvels. Both have penetrated the *arcana* of Nature and mastered its secrets. But the one works for his own purpose, his own glory; the other, never to give “a sign,” never for himself, but always, and only, for the good of others.

In *Mysticism* it has to be confessed, then, that this truly occult phase of the mystic life, which is found in dark shadow at its lowest point—a feature often wholly absent and in nowise necessary to the earlier stages of the life—reappears on its highest plane. But at this height it makes its reappearance in a brightness which baffles scrutiny almost more effectually than that deep shadow in which we discerned its inverted image. Yes, the student has to face the presence of this element of miracle, magic, “supernatural” power—call it what we may, according as we view it on the highest plane of the mystic life.

It is clear that it must be so. *Mysticism* claims to include the whole area of life and manifestation. It places the universe in man, making him a microcosm of the macrocosm. In doing this, it must

accept and repeat on the spiritual plane all that is found in the material world. And surely in Life and Death, in Birth and Growth, the renewal of the spring, in all the unsolved riddles of exact science—biology, chemistry, electricity—as well as in those perplexing phenomena, hypnotism, clairvoyance, telepathy, thought-transference, will-power, faith-healing, and a hundred kindred subjects over which science shakes its head, able neither to explain nor sweep away; in all these—rooted in that inscrutable *x*, the origin of the force called Life—we have a perfect world of mystery, even of miracle. All this must be represented in a system like Mysticism if it is to include all life and be true to its character. The simplest questions in science generally end in a *cul de sac* if they are pressed back far enough.<sup>1</sup> The *how* and the *why* are generally unanswerable quantities which involve as much real “miracle” as is ever claimed by true Mysticism. Miracles are but the supreme fulfilments of Nature, never its reversals. To find cases of defiance and outrage of natural laws, we must go not to Mysticism, but to fables and the chronicles of priestcraft and superstition. Not to have a full acceptance for what we, with our imperfect knowledge, call the “supernatural” would be clearly the most incon-

<sup>1</sup> “In spite of the progress which the exact sciences have made, we must not for a moment forget that the inner connection between the body and the mental processes is utterly unknown to us.”—ALBERT MOLL, *Hypnotism*.

ceivable and unsatisfactory position for any system of thought which pretends to deal with things unseen, the mysteries of life and death, and the nature of man. Mr. Benjamin Kidd, in his "Social Evolution," argues out with great clearness the position he lays down in his enunciation, that "A rational religion is a scientific impossibility, representing, from the nature of the case, an inherent contradiction of terms." If this be true, as we cannot seriously doubt, of religion, it must be *à fortiori* true of a religion that accepts the name of Mysticism.

The vain and the curious may, and doubtless often do, attack Mysticism from the lower plane, simply in order to gain hidden knowledge, as they think, and obtain power over phenomena. But this is a vastly different and a vastly inferior thing to commanding the forces of Nature from a higher plane, and gaining knowledge and power by authority and not by solicitude; gaining them as an effect of a given cause—the natural sequence of a patient, unself-seeking, spiritual quest. Thus gained, the power is simply natural, and is no more "miraculous" than birth and growth. Kingsley saw in all "the theurgic department of Mysticism" what he defined as "the despairing return to that ceremonialism which it had begun by shaking off, when it was disappointed in reaching its high aim by the proper method." But this, although a tolerably exact description of an aspect of thaumaturgy or Black

Art, implies an ignorance or an ignoring of the thought that there is a path, the highest of all, open to man, wherein he gains what is called supernatural power. A religion whose Scriptures are broadcast with miracle can scarcely deny this. And it is curious how a mind so wide and full of true vision as that of Charles Kingsley could fail to see that it is unreasonable to put aside all biblical cases of supernatural power and experience as not to be referred to or applied in any and every other argument for magic power on the higher planes. The extraordinary doctrine that such power once existed in that vague era that is called "biblical times," and has long since passed away, destroys all sense of continuity, and thus opens a very disastrous argument for religion in these days when Evolution is becoming an accepted law for all life. Those who argue that the supernatural power once existed but has passed away—somewhere, somehow—lay themselves open to the inference, hard to rebut, that it can, therefore, never have existed; and such a doubt sadly weakens their position. But Mysticism seems to have the courage of its opinions, and asserts that it has never been lost. On the other hand, its record of the examples of magic power would presumably be open to the interpretation of spiritual meaning, and lack that element of the statistical and marvellous that is prized by a world that always clamours to be given "a sign."

And if large sections of the thoughtful and scientific world to-day pooh-pooh the idea of any "supernatural" power being attainable under any conceivable form, it is irresistible to point to the fact that the very sciences they quote to prove the reason of their unbelief in "magic" have come down to us from men who were its scholars and adepts; that the achievements of practical science now are as truly miraculous as any real magic ever claimed to be; and that the greatest masters of science are the most careful not to pronounce anything impossible. As has been pointed out several times by liberal-minded investigators of the subjects that seem to border on the region of the supernatural, we must be careful not to claim supernatural power for ourselves in denying its existence; to pronounce clairvoyance, for example, an imposture (at least without the gravest study and the most exhaustive and impartial experiment), is to claim it for one's self.

It is significant of a rise in the level of spiritual thought amongst us that there is a serious and growing interest in psychical questions—an interest not of a morbid kind, but attentive and liberal. Since Braid began his magnetic experiments in 1841, the questions of animal magnetism, hypnotism, electro-biology, and all kindred subjects, have received growing study and fair-dealing even in England. In other countries the studies have developed into still larger proportions, and with greater results.

In France, in Germany, and in America they have risen into important systems. The name of Dr. Charcot has become of world-wide authority as leader of one of the schools in France, whilst the school of Nancy has Liébault and Professor Bernheim. Through Switzerland investigations passed into Germany, and there they have been carried on systematically.

These scientific researches put to flight, it is true, many tales and examples hitherto gravely believed and accepted of spiritual and supernatural power; and much which has been thought to be spiritual is proved to be but physical experience transcended-talised. But we cannot regret that mistake and delusion, however fair and impressive they may have seemed, should be swept away. The mystic fears no such losses, and shirks no revelations of science, knowing that the truly "magical" and "miraculous" elements do not lie in these unnatural and fabulous things. When exact science has probed all that it can touch, and brought its ruthless but beautiful search-light on every shadowed corner that it can reach, there will still be enough and to spare of miracle and magic left to justify and infinitely exceed all the most mysterious utterances that true Mysticism has ever made, all the wonder it proclaims, and all the world *super* the world of Nature which it reveals, and links with this world in a harmonious unity.

We cannot but observe with satisfaction that the unphilosophic and unscientific way in which the savants of a few years ago approached all such questions, even to the broad thesis of Religion itself, is more and more disappearing year by year. Every age has its own peculiar virtues and its peculiar weaknesses also. If the spirit of our day has been one of daring enquiry, its weakness seems to have been a sceptical materialism. It has been perfectly superstitious in its dislike of mystery. It has exhibited the antipathy to the occult which we usually associate with doubt not unaccompanied with fear. It has alternately quizzed and lost its temper over the mystic in all his aspects and questions; and both these attitudes seem a sad waste of time, since neither affords any valuable or even intelligent answer to the points at issue. Yet for ages—may we not say, indeed, throughout the known history of the world?—Science has till the last century walked hand in hand with Mysticism.

The rays of scientific truth which come down to us from the remote past are shed from the central sources of mystic truth. Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Thales, Anaximander, Plato, Aristotle, were the great mystics of Greece and the lights of science in their eras. The mystical philosophers of Egypt and of later Alexandria passed scientific knowledge on to the time when both Science and Mysticism, and all thought save that of dogma, were arrested for

centuries—to revive with the renascence of Scholasticism and Learning. Servetus, Giordano Bruno, and Vanini were martyrs alike in the causes of Science and of Mysticism. Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton did not reject the ancient wisdoms. Roger Bacon was a pioneer of science and a master of mystic lore. The science and learning that come to us from the Mohammedan universities of Cordova and Granada—nay, all Arab learning, to which Europe owed so much in the Dark Ages, with the great names of Avicenna and Averroes—all are obviously deeply tinged with Eastern and Classic Mysticism. Modern chemistry sprang from the crucibles and retorts of Rosicrucian alchemists. Astronomy can scarcely, without breaking the excellent fifth commandment, laugh at Astrology. Mysticism has, indeed, been often unassociated with Science; but Science, until quite recent times, has always been associated with Mysticism.

There is every good reason to suppose that the founder of Inductive Philosophy was a Rosicrucian. It has been stated that Isaac Newton was originally led to his discoveries by a study of the Kabbala; and illustrious names in science and scientific thought, ever since the modern age began its reign, have been found, if not on the actual and confessed circle of Mysticism, at least in that circle which revolves around it, with the gravitation of a compelling interest and attraction. The point seems

already in sight when the psychical and ethical can no longer be excluded from the physical and material. The hard lines are disappearing. The arid rule of the last generation of savants is drawing to a close. It is even being confessed that it is unscientific to be merely scientific. Carlyle's words are being accepted—"This world, after all our science and sciences, is still a miracle, inscrutable, magical, and more, to whosoever will think of it." Mr. Benjamin Kidd from one side, Professor Drummond from another, have within the last few years struck this note with courageous hands. "Are we quite sure," asks the latter writer, "that what we call a physical world is, after all, a physical world? The preponderating view of science at the present is that it is not. The very term 'natural world,' we are told, is a misnomer: that the world is a spiritual world, merely employing 'matter' for its manifestation." From an entirely opposite point of view, and one the more valuable because somewhat on the naturalistic side of things, Mr. Herbert Spencer argues in much the same strain, or at least to much the same issue.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Men who have not risen above that vulgar conception which unites with Matter the contemptuous epithets 'gross' and 'brute,' may naturally feel dismay at the proposal to reduce the phenomena of Life, of Mind, and of Society, to a level of existence which they think so degraded. But whoever remembers that the forms of existence which the uncultivated speak of with so much scorn, are shown by the man of science to be the more marvellous in their attributes, the more they are investigated, and are also proved to

Then, too, we are now told that atoms are not subdivisions of matter, but centres of force—a very upheaval of all the cherished ground of the materialist, since it would seem to prove that matter is “a condition of force, instead of force being a condition of matter”—a difference even more vital than that between the Ptolemaic and Copernican theories of the solar system. For what, we may ask, is “force”? The question is one that seems to suggest an answer of momentous issue and import. Haekel, in his “Evolution of Man,” touches the point in saying, “Spirit exists everywhere in Nature.” If the scientist has to own that atoms are centres of force—an *x* as mysterious as the First Cause or any concept of Deity—it would seem that Materialism is undermined in its very citadel. The confessions which carry on these mining operations grow stronger every day. “It is conceivable matter may react on mind in a way we can at present only dimly imagine, and the barrier between the two may gradually melt away, as many others have done.”<sup>1</sup> “It is impossible to resist the conclusion that all Nature is living thought.”<sup>2</sup> Such words as these give us hope that science and

be in their ultimate natures absolutely incomprehensible—as absolutely incomprehensible as sensation, or the conscious something which perceives it; whoever recognises this truth will see that the course proposed does not imply a degradation of the so-called higher, but an elevation of the so-called lower.”—*First Principles*.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Oliver Lodge, F.R.S.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Fitzgerald, F.R.S.

the world at large may before long grant the mystic's first and last position, that there is no such thing as matter apart from spirit, matter being but the last and densest expression of spirit.

Yes, strange as it may sound to some, and open as the statement may be to fierce attack and denial, I think it must be granted by any one who is furnished with equal knowledge of both sides of the question, that Mysticism is in essence and at foundation a scientific faith. It has doubtless been open to the limiting spirit of the ages it has passed through, and has been tinged with their errors. But this is equally true of science. The central ideas of Mysticism are cosmic, and its miracles and magic are never *contra*, though confessedly they are *super* Nature. It is difficult to believe that Agnosticism and Naturalism, that Disbelief and Materialism—call the negative philosophies by what name we may—would be so widespread and current in the modern world as they are if Mysticism were really known and understood.

And this—having briefly stated the supernatural side of Mysticism—leads us to observe two characteristics which must be owned to be well worthy of notice in this matter. The first is the extraordinary Ignorance which prevails in the world on this subject—the silence and rejection which surrounds it to this day; and the second is its Indestructibility.

## IV

We will take the first point—the Ignorance and silence.

I have already touched, in passing, on the vague and various uses of the word *Mysticism*, and the frequent misunderstanding of its meaning. Professor Jowett, speaking of the Neo-Platonists, says, “*Mysticism is not criticism.*” The sentence is one which reads just as well if it is turned right round. For, in truth, much of the criticism given to this subject by scholars argues small perception, and no reception, of its meaning. I have read far enough into some of the questions to perceive that many of the learned and scholarly commentators on mystical thought revolve laboriously and patiently in an orbit for ever outside the subject. This sounds an over-bold statement, and I am conscious of its heroic outlines. But it is no question of scholarship or information, however exact and exhaustive. The perception and understanding of *Mysticism* is, I am convinced, an attitude of mind—or rather, let me say, an inward state, inborn or innate. In most great subjects understanding is coupled with sympathy, perhaps even forerun by it. Of *Mysticism* it may be truly said that there is only one side from which it may be truly viewed, and that is the inside. Ruskin, speaking of certain aspects and beauties of nature,

tells us that they "must be sought ere they are seen, and loved ere they are understood." Such conditions are possibly ever truer of spiritual than of material beauty. Mysticism is, in its very nature, of the Spirit. To approach it from the point of the Letter, and to rest there, gives no reason for supposing that the Spirit is even surmised. We have, in fact, good authority for saying that in all such subjects a mere knowledge of the Letter "kills"—and that is a startling expression, worthy of grave attention. That the Letter might give but an outward presentation of the truth would seem natural, but few thinkers would dare to attribute to its knowledge the quality of Death. Little as I know of the subtle intricacies of Eastern thought, I know—or apprehend—enough to sit silent and amazed at many of the dissertations written in opposition to it—(or, even worse, in explanation)—by men before whose profound learning, from another point of view, I am equally willing to sit in the silence of admiration. That exhaustive technical planetary learning will sometimes bring about an anaemic condition in the inner structure of the man, is in itself a fine study in mystic thought. But we can scarcely doubt that such is sometimes the case. We shall remember that a poet of deep intuitions puts into his Litany a clause praying that we may be delivered from "the knowledge that is darkness."

But the ignorance of the inner meaning of Mys-

ticism is not, on the whole, surprising. It is the utter ignorance of its very being and presence in the general world which is so inexplicable. A great silence encompasses it. The secrecy which is sometimes emphasised by students of Mysticism as a necessary condition of the quest, may, in some measure, account for this ignorance. Many persons might be content with such an explanation, but it is not in reality sufficient to explain the matter. The secrecy observed by so many mystics is possibly the lingering shadow of the Initiations, wherein silence was made (wisely enough at the time) a matter of life and death, a shadow and necessity which the religious persecutions of the Middle Ages did not tend to dissipate. It also seems to spring from the conviction that there is an actual strength and power of growth in silence. One must, however, in justice own that the ignorance in the world about Mysticism is due less to a screen of concealment raised from within than to a wall of dislike, indifference, and misconception which is built up round the subject by those without. A system that is constructed on the known great Scriptures and philosophies of the world is clearly open to the world. "Angels," when they visit man, do not appear to hide or disguise themselves. They are simply unrecognised, and "entertained unawares." There is no such secret as that of a great truth. Solomon seems at least to have thought so. He

makes "Wisdom" in nowise lead a secluded hermitic life, or sequester herself from the haunts of men. Her habitual resorts, on the contrary, are asserted to be "in the openings of the gates," "in the street," in "the chief place of the concourse," on "the top of high places," and "at the entry of the city." Yet "*no man regarded.*" Wisdom was still seen but by the few—her voice was absolutely unrecognised—her message, in any truth, a secret one. The secrecy of Mysticism is hers, an open secret. It is the greatest and best-preserved secret of all.

No less a writer of our day than Count Tolstoi, in his work, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," comments on the extraordinary silence which invariably gathers round any thought of the kind. It is true that he names it in connection with social and national questions, but the title of the book is sufficient to hint that the line of its thought is on a foundation of mystic truth. The following passage, then, witnesses to this strange silence. He is speaking of Garrison's and Ballon's daring and heroic, if unwise and premature, protests against the un-Christlike attitude of Christendom, and he says: "I mention this in order to call attention to the deep interest which works of this class ought to excite in men who profess Christianity, and it would seem therefore that Ballon's zeal should have been recognised, and the ideas he expressed either accepted or disproved. But such was not the case. . . . The

fate of Garrison, and particularly that of Ballou, almost unknown, notwithstanding fifty years of active and persistent work in one direction, has confirmed me in the belief that *there exists a certain unexpressed but firm determination to oppose all such attempts by a wall of silence.*" This passage holds a wide truth. The opponents of Mysticism would perhaps explain this silence which surrounds the system very plausibly as being the judgment of the world and the ages on the whole matter, a judgment more eloquent than any denunciation.

But this argument, which at first commends itself to the intelligence, does not bear scrutiny and pressure. It would (from its own point of view) be crediting the world at large with true *spiritual* discernment, and with a persistent calm wisdom; and neither philosophy nor history gives any authority for such a position. For the average sanity, and for the average well-being—physical and social—of the masses, the worldly wisdom of the world has shrewd justice and distinct value. In these matters, as in all planetary questions, even including the high matters of art and learning, the children of this world are generally wiser than the children of light—wiser in the worldly sense, because they move in the strict limitations of this world. They can, therefore, perfect their systems, which the children of light neither can nor care to do. There is, moreover, in all religious and spiritual systems (and Mysticism is no

exception) a plane which is admittedly fitted to this world at large, and for which the world in answer has marked approval and willing acceptance. But for the higher planes—those “kingdoms” which fearlessly proclaim that they are not for or of this world—the world has always had but one answer—rejection and misunderstanding: a rejection and misunderstanding so complete that they practically issue into a great silence.

Mysticism has always had (as was pointed out at the beginning of this essay) an eminently practical side, when it turns itself to practical matters and the world of “life”; but the highest road is, and for ever must be, antagonistic to the planetary view of life and the dominion of the mind. Surely a hundred texts from our own Scriptures, and a hundred testimonies from the Scriptures and philosophies of other lands and ages, could be quoted to prove that silence, misunderstanding, rejection, and even hatred, are the signs and badges in this world, not of the lower, but of the higher life. To be “despised and rejected of men” has two interpretations. It is the doom of the criminal and the fate of “the Son of God.” We must be careful in judgment. In judging Mysticism we cannot fail to observe that it is despised and rejected of men. We may take it as a sign that it has been weighed in the balance by the ages, and found wanting, proven dangerous and malefic; or we may take it as the credentials of its high fellowship.

The second sign which arrests observation is its Indestructibility. This system of thought claims—not without proof of verity—to be the secret which is hinted at as being veiled and exoterically expressed in every creed the world has known. It is beyond question that there has always been an esoteric meaning in all rituals and statements of worship. In none is it more expressly stated that there is such veiled and spiritual meaning than in the faiths of the Jew and of the Christian. Whether we take the words of the great leader of the enslaved Israelites from Egypt, of whom it is written that his face was covered with a veil, and that he orally explained to chosen elders the inner and unwritten meaning of the written law; or the words of Him of whom it is written, that "without a parable spake He not unto the people," we find alike, in all the sacred books of Jew and Gentile, the hint, frequent and unmistakable, of a Spirit which is veiled by the Letter. In all the great religions of the East and of the ancient world, we find, more and more, as we study them, and learn to decipher their signs and hieroglyphics, the distinct trace of inner meanings known to the initiated, but veiled from the vulgar and profane under a revelation suited to their needs, and not too vast and vague for their capacity. I believe I am right in affirming that the Roman Church claims a written and a traditional revelation. It

is this mystery—which has been kept secret since the foundation of the world—which *Mysticism* professes to teach and to guard. Doubtless, many people would assert this profession to be a vain and empty boast. They would argue that the high-sounding name of *Mysticism* is given to what is in reality simply an instinct of the human mind, a natural tendency in certain people in every age toward the mystical element of thought; just as the religious instinct altogether may be pronounced to be simply the working on an inherent factor in human nature which works out its own evolution, even as civilisation and nationality work theirs. But this theory, upheld as it is by masterly proof and often well-nigh unanswerable arguments, cannot be held to explain the whole system of *Mysticism*. It can scarcely explain the fact that when we take any of the great tenets of *Mysticism* and follow them back and back, tracing them into the remotest known past, we find the essential and underlying truth is always one and the same, and is as pure and “spiritual” at the farthest known point as in its latest development; nor why many of these same truths do not run parallel with natural human instincts, nor connect themselves with simple, aboriginal observation of Nature, but, on the contrary, often reverse and deny both—just as the facts of science often run counter to and reverse the witness of the senses. Religion in all ages has of course

always taken and used the forms and symbols it found, as best suited to the age and its intelligence. But an explanation, however complete and satisfying, of the origin of the forms and symbols leaves the vivifying spirit still of inexplicable origin. The philosophic method of proving spiritual truths to be mere expansions of solar or arboreal myths, has been beneficially carried by the spirit of humour to its *reductio ad absurdum*.

Further, it can scarcely be explained away how it is that arguments, which beyond question logically sap the foundations of religion as generally received and understood, are accepted at once by Mysticism, and, being accepted, leave it untouched and unshaken. It is a curious and startling fact that of all the great modern writers, scientific and philosophic, who have attacked the position of dogmatic theology and received religion, or of those whose works, if not antagonistic to religion, have certainly exhibited a tendency toward Free Thought, not *one* has actually and systematically attacked the principles of Mysticism. Nay, it is even true to say that most of them show a marked sympathy with the line of thought. Amongst such may be named Spinoza, Lessing, Strauss, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Carlyle, Emerson, and Thoreau. It must be owned to be a very striking fact that many of these great writers actually quote and constantly refer to the great

centres of Eastern and of Classic mystic thought, and that all exhibit such sympathy (conscious and unconscious) with Mysticism, that their writings can be read with almost perfect acceptance and certainly with perfect pleasure by all mystics.

And if modern philosophy cannot perplex or weaken Mysticism, neither can the discoveries of modern science affright it; since it believes that it holds truths which will bear the test of all such scrutiny and rise above it. The facts and discoveries before which the "faith" of so many "believers" has disintegrated, have not, so far, touched, save with added certainty, the central thoughts of Mysticism. The vast cycles of time, the inconceivable depths of the stellar spaces, with which the geologist and astronomer deal, in nowise stretch the borders of its universe. The recent discoveries in Egyptian epigraphy, the profound researches now made into Eastern literature, and the revivification of the hieroglyphic utterances of civilisations which have been dumb for centuries, bring neither confusion to the mystic, nor force him to readjust the articles of his faith. He rejoices when "the stone speaks and the wall utters its cry." The perplexing aspects and threatened social upheavals of modern life, which disturb the minds of so many people and the codes of conventional morals, are to him but expected signs. He finds nothing at the end of this eventful century which cannot find acceptance in this

system of thought, or has been able to take anything from it.

Corruption and degradation almost inevitably follow the materialisation and dogmatic formularisation of any faith. It has been the history of every creed: but the life within reasserts itself in new forms, and is indestructible. It inspires and outlives a hundred incarnations. It is strange, and yet natural, that each form as it crystallises and materialises becomes oftentimes the bitterest foe and opponent of the spirit which it originally expressed. For centuries the Catholic Church suppressed with strong, and often cruel, hands all expressions of Mysticism, save those great truths she enshrined and had pronounced canonical. Within her own pale she regarded any distinct utterance of the mystic life with suspicion and displeasure (as in the case of Molinos), whilst in the outside world rack and flame were the instruments of her anger. Modern science and philosophy might seem harder opponents than the Inquisition and the Papal See, and yet we find a positive revival of some phases of Mysticism in the present day, and to the new order as to the old it still shows the feature of indestructibility.

Canon Liddon has a fine passage in one of his sermons<sup>1</sup> about the triumph of Christianity over the manifold dangers that have beset and attacked it.

<sup>1</sup> Easter Sermons.

He traces its victories, not only over crushing forces and dynasties which have tried to break or corrupt it, but also over forces and dynasties that it, in turn, has attacked with the beneficent and unseen force of a new life. But whilst Mysticism would rejoice in this mighty and marvellous revelation, it would point to it but as the latest instance of a victory that is eternal—a victory consummated not in one era and revelation only, but in all time, in the universal history of mankind, and in the silent evolution of a universal and indestructible mystic truth.

## V

As long ago as 1886 an article appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* from the pen of Charles Kingsley, in which he hints at the probability of "an outburst of Mysticism, as great in some respects, as fantastic in others, as that of the thirteenth or seventeenth centuries," in "sober England, during the next half-century."<sup>1</sup> The words seem almost prophetic. For it must be confessed there is a growing interest around us in this subject. It may, indeed, be too much to say that there is anything that can be literally termed "an outburst of Mysticism" in England; but the matter might, perhaps, be judged as something deeper. Outbursts are, in the very nature of things, transitory. They are generally less worthy of regard than steady growth. The interest in Mysticism that

<sup>1</sup> *Literary and General Essays*.

is observable around us to-day seems to partake less of the character of an outburst than of growth. This interest has been observable for the last fifteen years or so. Some writers on Occultism go so far as to give the date of the rise of this wave of interest, and to place it in the December of 1880. The year 1881 was, at the time, as many will remember, much written about as a year of portent.

And indeed—apart from the many fanciful, and the not few rather foolish, statements and prophetic utterances that were then enunciated as to the meaning of the year and its numerical sign (statements in which I think the Great Pyramid played a conspicuous but unresponsive part)—there were, I believe, some good reasons in occult science for supposing the point of time was, planetarily, one of grave crisis and issue, and was marked for a rise of mystic thought. Certain it is that about that time there was a sensible movement of thought toward the revived or, as some may think, moribund Mysticism of the East and of ages past. This wave of thought has been followed by others. Signs are not wanting to prove that the movement has reached and is swaying people who are unconscious of its drift and vibration, and who would probably smile or frown at the name of Mysticism. Yet, just as it has been stated that the movement in the Anglican Church that was labelled “Ritualism” by those who were satisfied with the quota of ritualism they

already possessed and liked, was in reality only an ecclesiastical expression of a very widespread impulse—an impulse which, on similar or associated lines, was felt by all religious denominations, and on different lines affected Art, and even touched our houses and daily life—so it may be noted that this interest in mystic and psychic subjects is but an articulate expression of a marked impulse which touches, in some form or other, nearly every department of thought in the world around us to-day. The mystic would discern in this general movement a deep vibration, as it were, of spiritual thought in the world in the direction of Mysticism, though he would not class all the surface and area stirred by the vibration as, in itself, mystical.

In some cases, however, the drift is almost more than an impetus, and exhibits absolute signs of mystic character. It is evidenced strongly in the religious thought of the day. A noted preacher, who often gives his congregations in his own sermons a line of distinctly mystical thought of a beautiful kind, thinks it necessary to warn his listeners and readers of “the dangers of a spurious form of Quietism that is rife among us, which lacks the exquisite piety of Molinos, and exaggerates his tendencies.”<sup>1</sup> The titles of religious books in these days are often most mystical and symbolic. Mystic symbolism and meaning is quite curiously popular in

<sup>1</sup> Canon Eyton, “The Lord’s Prayer.”

our pictures and illustrated books and magazines, side by side with daring "realism" and the crudity of archaic draughtsmanship. A knowledge of mystical lore is constantly to be read between the lines of our novels, in spite of the realistic and modern methods. During the last year or so the magazines which perform the ever-popular office of story-tellers have given us story after story of some phase of Occultism—as it is popularly understood—magic, mysteries of the far East and sorceries of the Black Continent, re-incarnation, curious suggestions of psychic possibilities and experiences, ghost stories galore, science carried to the point of Black Art—tales that deal in some form or other with what is thought to be occult. All this, of course, is on the shadowy side of Mysticism (the only side cared about), but such a copious supply must be the result of a large demand. That a tendency toward mystical thought of a purer kind should appear in our poetry is but natural, for the poet must, in his very nature, be always something of a mystic. But in some of our modern poets we perceive something more than the expression of a feeling natural and inborn. It is the deliberate and conscious enunciation of an instructed Mysticism. Thus, and surely thus alone, can there be any intelligent and wholly satisfying explanation of numbers of Browning's poems. It is the fashion of all parties and schools of thought to claim Browning. Good

Churchmen have written to prove him a champion of the orthodox faith. He is delightfully wise and ambiguous, and his vision and utterance are wide and impersonal, as a rule. But I have read no satisfying explanation of his truly mystical poems, and I think there is but one. His known attitude towards "Spiritualism," and the presence on his pages of "Mr. Sludge, the Medium," are arguments for, rather than against the idea of his Mysticism, for reasons I have briefly hinted in the earlier part of this Essay. And surely the deep and true Mysticism parabled and particularised in "Paracelsus," "Abt Vogler," "Saul," "A Death in the Desert," "Evelyn Hope," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "An Epistle," and in a hundred pages in "The Ring and the Book" and "Parleyings with Certain People," even to the final triumph that rings in his "Epilogue," is no mere phrasing of poetic thought and drama, but an integral and inherent part, and a carefully-chosen utterance of a deep inward faith and deeper inward intuition. In some of Rossetti's choicest poems the spirit, and even the expression, of Mysticism is discernible, although in him (even in "The Blessed Damozel," of which it forms the only worthy interpretation) it never rises to the sublime and ordered thought and expression of Browning. Surely, too, without such an interpretation, many of Walt Whitman's finest pages become his most unintelligible utterances. Finally, the vibration of

Mysticism, and the responding chord to it, ring out in all our modern music. Music is our nineteenth-century magic. Harmony has always been accepted by Mysticism as its expression. Poets and seers have proclaimed it; but nowadays every one is beginning to feel its magical power.

Even some of the present-day antagonisms to technical Mysticism are in reality but an inverted expression of its unsuspected but accepted influence. Paradoxical as it sounds, I think that both the Realistic spirit of our day, and its irrepressible spirit of inquiry and research, are in reality but signs of the same widespread movement—alert and awakened thought acting on the mental plane. And, by an irony and natural humour on which it is pleasant to note one may always safely depend, even in the gravest and most solemn subjects, the undulations of these vibrating waves of mystic thought are nowhere more discernible than in the writings of some of the strenuous opponents of Mysticism. Let it be granted that the propagandists of Occultism and various kindred subjects, lay themselves open to attack from any and every quarter in an almost naïve way. But it is also amusing to observe that those who lead the attack often exhibit, in a way no less naïve, either the characteristics which Mysticism has predicated for this age, or an unconscious tendency toward the very lines they denounce. For example, no more occult

book, in a certain sense of that ill-used word, has appeared since Swedenborg's "Celestial Arcana," than "Earth's Earliest Ages," in which Mr. Pember falls, with a great onslaught, and a veritable "*vade retro me*," on "The Perfect Way," and all books of that ilk; and no work has been written which so aggressively exhibits the stigmata which Mysticism has prognosticated for the age, as "Degeneration," in which the deepest dungeon under the moat of Herr Max Nordau's madhouse-prison-castle is reserved for "mystics." There is a refreshing bit of occult humour in the situation.

These signs of a widespread movement are of little importance in individual instances, but they gain weight and value when regarded as indications that such a movement is astir. Unfortunately at all such times the least exalted and unworthiest examples of the movement are often the ones that are most conspicuous. In the popular mind the idea of Mysticism seems still inalienably mixed up with a hankering after the phenomenal and the wonder-working.

Yet it is patent to any one who is unprejudiced that the subject is a very remarkable one, and possesses features which should claim the attentive notice both of the thoughtful and the scientific. There are strange and pregnant truths to be found in Mysticism, even by the passing enquirer, if he be in earnest; truths which, though they be reviewed but mentally, are very well worth deep considera-

tion. These truths, coming down to us from remote times, and from faiths and wisdoms that have passed into other forms, arrest the attention by their present vitality and force. Two points will be found to be very striking. First, that some of the oldest theories and axioms of the mystic science which traces its genealogy back to the earliest known ages, have, during our own time, received substantial verification from modern science and modern discovery. Second, that some of these occult and mystic theories, when taken in connection with certain passages in the older scriptures of our Bible, bring those passages (in a way no other interpretation can achieve) into possible relation with the latest results of scientific research, or at least protect them from indignity by removing them into a field wherein they take a new meaning. Let us examine, very briefly, a few instances.

## VI

I. We will begin with an axiom which is constantly used in mystic and occult thought. "As Above, so Below; as on the Earth, so in the Sky." The origin of the phrase seems open to question. It forms the premise of the argument of the alchemistic transmutation of metals, as defined in the *Tabula Smaragdina*. It is written in many forms. Some writers credit the axiom to Thoth, the Egyptian Adept, known to Alexandrian Neo-Platonists as Hermes

Trismegistus. Whatever origin may be assigned to the formula, it may be said to be one of the laws of occult science. It is the refrain, as it were, of its Song Celestial, as well as its test for the truth of a thought, scientific or spiritual.

¶ The first thing we note in the formula is that, whilst the latter half of the axiom implies the method of working from the known to the unknown, the first portion suggests what might be called Revelation. It is, in fact, the Descent and Ascent which is mystically described in the Seer's Dream in the Desert in Gen. xxviii. Therein the man rests his brain (the highest point of matter on the planet) on the stone (the lowest), and the "angels" descend and ascend—descend to the stone and ascend through it and the man back to the starting-point, in one great cycle of spirit in manifestation—Evolution and Involution. This, I believe, is the mystic interpretation of Jacob's Dream. The same idea is beautifully symbolised in the interlaced triangles known as "Solomon's Seal."<sup>1</sup> And when we turn to modern

<sup>1</sup> We find it also as the underlying truth under another form in the great triple head sculptured in the caves of Elephanta. Here we get Brahm in the centre (the source of Life); Siva on one side (the expiration of the Divine Breath in the cosmos—Evolution); Vishnu on the other side (the indrawing of the Breath back into its origin—Involution). In the mystic idea of Human and Spiritual Life the same thought appears worked out in Man as the microcosm of the macrocosm. Natural Birth represents Evolution, humanity that has adapted itself to its outward condition. Spiritual Birth (Regeneration) represents Involution, the commencement of humanity to adapt itself to its new inward conditions.

thought and science, we find that the initial steps are taken which might lead to a confession, on other ground and in other terms, of the truth involved in the ancient adage. For if there is not in the ranks of science anything at present like a direct confession of any special spiritual element discernible in the constitution of man, or to be predicated for his possible attainment, there is a growing confession (already named) that he is in his essence and material a spiritual being, since Matter itself is more and more held to be but a manifestation of an unknown *x* called Force, whilst the last word of science as to the cosmos is Movement: both of which confessions approximate a living Thought. Those who see in man only a great evolution from Matter, no longer see in such a theory "a Gospel of Dirt," nor allow that it is any infringement or belittling of the wonder of Human Nature.

There are some who declare that such a thesis is quite compatible with the principles of Christianity and the doctrine of Immortality. They argue a glorification of *all* life and manifestation, and trace the divine element in its evolution as fully as ever Theology traced it in a special creation. There is an "ultimate synthesis" thus announced, "in which man and nature are regarded as manifestations of one spiritual principle."<sup>1</sup> The very highest possibilities of spiritual life are by these means held to be

<sup>1</sup> Professor E. Caird, "Essays on Literature and Philosophy."

attainable ; and man—man as we see him to-day—is considered to include not only all the elementary types from which he has worked his way up so far, but also to hold the latent material for the realisation of the perfect archetype which must be his goal. In the earliest progenitors, it is argued, were contained the germinal potentialities of the perfect man. As has been well said : “ Throughout its whole extent the perfect type exists potentially in all the intermediate stages by which it is more and more nearly approached, and if it did not exist, neither could they. There could be no development of an absent life. . . . Human life as it is transcends, though it includes, that of the lower forms through which it has developed ; human life as it will be, must include, though it may transcend, its present manifestations, otherwise it would no longer be a life of evolution.”<sup>1</sup> In this supposition, then, of a superhuman exemplar toward which man has been and is still working, involving as it does the existence of a germinal superhuman prototype ; as well as in the more scientific allowance of the immaterial nature and essence of matter, we find a growing confession that there is, as the ancient adage suggests, a working from an “ above ” to a “ below,” and thence from “ earth ” to “ sky ” ; and that matter is but the lowest point of spirit—the point of the descent at which the ascent is commenced.

<sup>1</sup> Caillard, “ Progressive Revelation.”

The axiom is, however, often written in the simpler form of its latter order: "As below, so above; as on the earth, so in the sky,"—a change which can be taken, according to the point of view, as showing the loose inexactness of vague and valueless thought, or as a proof of its wide truth, implying that it presents a perfect circle which can be taken in any segment or from any starting-point. And, tested by the discoveries of modern science, the application of the thought, "as below, so above; as on the earth, so in the sky," is found to be true on the material plane. Mysticism always asks such proof, holding a truth is always true. It does not shrink from tests which dogmatic theology has often resisted and refused. When we look to astronomy—the science the axiom naturally invites—we find that the investigation of that science proves that to the further limit of discovered and discoverable space the old law of Mysticism holds good. To what has been called the pre-Copernican theory of the universe,<sup>1</sup> the axiom has little intelligibility.

<sup>1</sup> The expression is open to question. It is generally stated in astronomical works that Copernicus was the "discoverer" of the fact that the earth travels round the sun. But there are some good reasons for supposing that this fact was known to Greece, Egypt, and Chaldea. It is thought possible that the knowledge was confined to the circle of initiation, and was forbidden to be divulged. Professor Jowett credits "the Ancients" with the Copernican knowledge, as will be seen in a passage from his *Introduction to the "Timæus"* (quoted farther on). It is held by all mystic writers that Pythagoras and some of the ancient philosophers knew the right theory of our system. But the knowledge

But when we face modern astronomy, when we hear of the revelations of the telescope and the spectroscope, when the chemist and the mathematician tell us that the same forces, the same elements, and the same laws which vivify, form, and govern our planet, are discoverable and detectable through the length and breadth of that immeasurable bit of the universe through which we are moving, we come to see a larger application and measure of truth than was first apparent in the mystic adage.

Astronomy also tells us that the conditions of life which obtain on earth—birth, childhood, youth, maturity, old age, and death—are discernible in the starry heavens. “There are stars young, middle-aged, old, and decrepit; and there are stars cold and dead, radiating no energy, and whose existence can be known only by their influence exerted through the force of gravitation upon the proper motion of other bodies.”<sup>1</sup> As on the earth, so in the sky.

The latter part of the sentence just quoted suggests another curious parallel. For we all recognise, and are often affected by the perturbations (to employ the phrase of the astronomers) of unseen forces and influences. The springs of human motive and action was lost subsequently, till 1543, when Copernicus published his great “discovery.” On the other hand, there is the order of the planets as held by the astrologers of Rome and Mediæval Europe, and this places the sun as a wanderer round the earth between Mars and Venus. It is, however, a moot-point whether the very ancient philosophers did not know the Copernican theory.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Clodd, “The Story of Creation.”

are often hard to trace, harder to explain. Not only the spectators cannot see the influence at work, but the person influenced is often at a loss to account for the course that is pursued. So, in like way, we find astronomers tell us that certain stars are affected at times, deflected from their proper course, perturbed, and occultated, by bodies that are not to be seen, bodies to be felt by their influence only (as stated), but which evade all search. Thus Flammarion tells us of a lost and dark planet. Thus Sir Robert Ball tells us a star is sometimes eclipsed by some unknown intercepting body, and further says, "Besides the great bodies in the universe which attract attention by their brilliancy, there are also other bodies of stupendous mass which have but little brilliancy —probably some of them possess none at all."<sup>1</sup>

These suggestions of astronomy on the old Her-

<sup>1</sup> "The Story of the Heavens."

(These unseen worlds—be they what they may—give some ground for thinking that the old occult idea of the "Dark Satellite," and the unseen abodes of "the Inversive Brethren," is not so hopelessly unscientific as some people might be minded hastily to pronounce it. Names of such portentous and mysterious suggestion as these I have quoted have fallen from the melodrama of over-credulity to the burlesque of over-scepticism. Both points of view seem equally mistaken. The belief in "ghosts" in the ignorant mind is a foolish thing, but in the ultra-rational mind the fear of believing in them—or in anything ghostly—is almost a more foolish thing. It is a fact worthy of note, in passing, that modern science, sublimely indifferent to Ancient Wisdoms, tells us of the presence of unknown, unseen, and dark orbs in this mysterious universe. There are, indeed, more things in—the Heavens—as in the Earth —than are dreamt of in our Philosophies—or Sciences.)

metic or Alchemistic formula lead us to another thought of conceivable parallel. In it we find ourselves regarding the central mystery of human life—the mystery of sex. And remembering not only the law of “as on the earth, so in the sky,” but further that in all Wisdom Religions of old, and the occult sciences of every age, the theory of the Divine Feminine has always been held, we look to see if science has any analogy on this question, whereby the greatest of all human factors on earth can be read into the sky. Analogy, it would seem, there is, though it may be held to be too unsubstantial for any reasonable ground for thought. Two of the great active forces on our planet, we are told, are Nutrition and Reproduction. That the latent possibilities of the idea of sex exist in these factors it would be difficult to deny. The earth is often called the mighty mother—a phrase that Science does not repudiate. The sun must be said in this image to represent the celestial spouse. The same imagery might be used with equal truth to all planets and all solar systems. Nature is also given a similar feminine character, with equal obvious truth of illustration. And when we go on to think of and personify Nature, not merely as our own planetary and earthly mother, but as the responding power and impersonation of cosmic life throughout the universe, such thought of sex as lies in the analogy rises to sublime and starry height, and writes its message “in the sky.”

We are told that the universe is matter and power. Power and matter are the scientific parallels for the "Intelligence" and "Wisdom" of the Kabballists. In the Sephiroth of the Kabbala the "Crown" is called "En Soph"—the manifestation of Deity in creation. In it are supposed to reside the life and dynamic power of the universe. The first two "emanations" of the "Crown"—on the right hand and on the left—are "Binah" and "Chocmah"—(Intelligence and Wisdom). These are masculine and feminine. Wisdom (Chocmah—the "Sophia" of the Early Church) is feminine. From these spring the two pillars of the Sephiroth. With all this, however (deeply interesting and wonderful as the study is, and full of spiritual meaning), we have nothing to do in this analogy. All that is attempted is to show the ancient division of the Supreme Cause into two "emanations"—masculine and feminine. These emanations—Intelligence and Wisdom—correspond in their primal importance with the Power and Matter, the Attraction and Repulsion of the scientists. And in the four latter expressions it is not hard to trace the same root-idea as that which was confessed in the old Kabbalistic figure.

It may be thought by some to be somewhat of a "twisting fair reasoning to a crooked end" to read the thought of sex into this parallel, but yet it is certain that the line of thought seems to other minds straight and clear. Nor is there, it is scarcely

necessary to add, any degradation or materialising of spiritual and divine things in such an argument, truly and fearlessly regarded. It is rather a sanctification and transfiguration of an idea, which, if once separated from the spirit, and prisoned simply in its material physical expression, must sink—as it has sunk—to endless confusion of thought, if not to dishonour and degradation. Science, at least, will surely not quarrel with Mysticism for contending that the great principle of sex is discernible throughout the universe, even until it is absorbed in the undivided and final source of all manifestation. And thus again the dictum of Mysticism stands the test of searching analogy.

Of the ethical and psychical analogies and truths to be drawn from the expression I do not speak. In these lie its real significance. But I merely attempt to suggest where the old-world wisdom is sustained by the thought of the new world.

2. The mystic has always held that the Seen is the Unreal, and the Unseen is the Real. He holds that all the things which men call real are, in truth, the very things which are phantasmal, being but shadows of the corresponding unseen realities. Doubtless it is greatly due to this theory and its misapplication and misconstruction by the outside world that a mystic is looked on as a dreamer—some one who lives and moves in unrealities, and would try to prove realities a dream. As, however,

this is a subject which I approach in the Essay headed "The Illusion of Realism" in this volume, I must not enter into it here. Yet it may be permissible to point out briefly some of the more obvious testimonies which science gives us in these days as to the truth of the mystic's creed on this subject. We know that everything we see or touch, or in any way "sense," and every atom of our bodies, and of every substance about us, is actually under a process of change every second: that there is no pause in life, no pause even in what we call death. All life and nature is in very truth the Eternal Flux of Heraclitus.

Science has taught us the hundred and one instances in which the "seen" is in a sense "unreal." It tells us that the earth, which seems stationary, is in reality whirling along at the rate of eighteen miles a second, and has eleven principal motions as it rushes on. It tells us that the sun does not, so to speak, give us light or heat, but only creates them in our atmosphere, all beyond that slender wrappage being cold and dark to a point we scarcely realise. It tells us that the stars we see are but appearances of those orbs, reaching us after years and æons of voyaging through space. It tells us that the plant which we see grow gets its substance neither from the root nor from the mould, but by absorption and mutation of unseen elements. It tells us that the blue of the sky, the green of the grass, the lovely hues of dawn

and sunset, are all mere sensations, non-existent and non-actual.

And science goes further in proving the ancient belief. One might suppose it would be silent when the mystic stretches boldly into the dark, as it were, and says that the Unseen is the Real. But it is not so. "It matters not," says Mr. Edward Clodd in his "Story of Creation," "into how many myriad substances—animal, plant, or mineral—an atom of oxygen may have entered, nor what isolation it has undergone, bond or free it retains its own qualities. It matters not how many millions of years have elapsed during these changes, age cannot wither or weaken it; amidst all the fierce play of the mighty agencies to whom it has been subjected, it remains unbroken and unworn. To it may apply the ancient words, 'The things which are not seen are eternal.'"<sup>1</sup> Even

<sup>1</sup> A passage in Dr. Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe" on this point is so beautiful that I give it as a note. "A particle of water, raised from the sea, may ascend invisibly through the air; it may float above us in the cloud, it may fall in the raindrop, sink into the earth, gush forth again in the fountain, enter the rootlets of a plant, rise up with the sap to the leaves, be there decomposed by the sunlight into its constituent elements, the oxygen and hydrogen; of these and other elements, acids and oils of various organic compounds may be made; in these, or in its undecomposed state, it may be received into the food of animals, circulate in their blood, be essentially concerned in acts of intellection executed by the brain; it may be expired in the breath. Though shed in a tear in moments of despair, it may give birth to the rainbow, the emblem of hope. Whatever the course through which it has passed, whatever mutations it has undergone, whatever the force it has submitted to, its elementary constituents endure."

the recent startling discovery given us by chemistry, that our old friend the atom is not quite the last word on the material side of things, it being proved to be not a rigid and indivisible particle, but a vortex-ring, a little system of force in itself, a bit of living energy,—even this but presses the reality farther and farther back into the unseen, and strengthens rather than weakens the truth ; since the “unseen” grows ever more “real” as it recedes from the world of the “seen.” The indestructibility of matter is the scientific witness to the truth of the mystic belief, so often spiritually expressed, that the Unseen is the Real.

3. Plato, one of the high-priests of Mysticism, enunciates the theory of the Reality of Ideas. This principle has always been held in all schools of mystic thought. It is represented in the teaching of Heraclitus, and is also clearly the *Noûs* of Anaxagoras. It is curious to find the ancient mystic thought evolved into a dogma of modern science,—Evolution,—although only a few impartial and just thinkers have pointed out the unacknowledged but undoubted origin of the scientific “discovery.” Amongst these just and discerning thinkers must be named Professor Max Müller, Professor Jowett, and Mr. Edward Clodd. The first-named writer has a passage, too long for quotation,<sup>1</sup> of remarkable lucidity and logic, in his Gifford Lectures

<sup>1</sup> Theosophy and Psychological Religion, pp. 385-389.

(which I have already named several times), in which he argues that the theory of the Origin of Species—so epoch-making in the world of science—is, in essence, an expansion and practical illustration of the Platonic theory of the Reality of Ideas. He ends by saying: “One feels almost ashamed if one sees how much more profound is the theory of the Origin of Species as conceived by Plato than that of modern naturalists.” Professor Jowett traces the same origin for the great scientific dictum; and that Mr. Edward Clodd credits the ancients with the thought is evidenced in the title of his latest work, “Pioneers of Evolution, from Thales to Huxley.”

The mystic world would, I think, declare the thought of the reality of ideas to lie at the root of many of the phenomena which the world calls miracles; for a miracle is, in its idea, but an embodiment and materialisation of an original thought—as in the case of “miraculous” healings—a reversion to the original type. The thesis of Ideas, or, as science calls them, Types, in a Divine Mind or Reason which is projected into the evolution of Matter, is very startlingly stated in the fourth and fifth verses of the second chapter of Genesis—words that are very often read, but seldom, as it would seem, marked or digested: “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made

the earth and heaven, and every plant of the field *before it was in the earth*, and every herb of the field *before it grew.*" Surely this is an arresting statement, and "gives us pause." Surely we have a Reality of Ideas, an Origin of Species, here.

4. We may notice a few other instances in which modern science has taken up ground originally marked out (though the landmarks have been forgotten or swept away by neighbourly hands) by the ancient philosophers, who, let it be remembered, were almost all of them "initiated" into the "mysteries," and therefore are honestly and unquestionably to be ranked as mystics.<sup>1</sup> The wisdom of the ancient world is always confessed to be on the side of Mysticism. Even writers who dislike mystical thought own this fact, though they own it with regret.

It is well in such a case to take the witness of one who is acknowledged to be accurate and unbiassed, who is a scholar beyond question, and who deprecates the thought of Mysticism wherever he can do so. Professor Jowett, in his preface to the "Timaeus," thus sums up the position of the thought under his review in relation to science: "To do justice to the subject we should consider

<sup>1</sup> We may apply to many of the ancient philosophic theories a sentence in Helmholtz's "Sensations of Tone," wherein, speaking of the Pythagorean principles of music, he says: ". . . And if, as is probable, the knowledge was partly derived from Egyptian priests, it is impossible to say in what remote antiquity this law was known."

the physical philosophy of the ancients as a whole ; we should remember (1) that the nebular theory was the received belief of the early physicists ; (2) that the development of animals out of frogs who came to the land, and of man out of the animals, was held by Anaximenes in the sixth century before Christ ; (3) that even by Philolaus and the early Pythagoreans the earth was held to be a body like the other stars, revolving in space around the sun of central fire ; (4) that the beginnings of chemistry are discernible in the 'similar particles' of Anaxagoras. Also they knew or thought (5) that there was a sex in plants as well as in animals ; (6) they were aware that musical notes depended on the relative length or tension of the strings from which they were emitted, and were measured by the ratios of number ; (7) that mathematical laws pervaded the world, and even quantitative differences were supposed to have their origin in number ; (8) the annihilation of matter was denied by several of them, and held to be a transformation only." He goes on to own that "The greatest 'divination' of the ancients was the supremacy which they assigned to mathematics in all the realms of nature. For in all of them there is a foundation of mathematics ; even physiology partakes of figure and number ; and Plato is not wrong in attributing them to the human frame, but in the omission to observe how little could be explained by them. Thus, we may

remark in passing that the most fanciful of ancient philosophies is also the most nearly verified in fact. The fortunate guess that the world is a sum of numbers and figures has been the most fruitful of anticipations. The 'diatonic' scale of the Pythagoreans and Plato suggested to Kepler that the secret of the distances of the planets from one another was to be found in mathematical proportions. . . . And now a favourite speculation of modern chemistry is the explanation of qualitative difference by quantitative, which is at present verified to a certain extent, and may hereafter be of far more universal application. What is this but the atoms of Democritus and the triangles of Plato? The ancients should not be wholly deprived of the credit of their guesses because they were unable to prove them. May they not have had, like the animals, an instinct of something more than they knew?"

This passage cannot be accused of being partial or over-civil to the ancients. To liken them to the "animals," and write their knowledge down as "guesses," is a rather deprived and arid way of putting the confession. The confession itself, therefore, is the more valuable. Of confession of the "fortunate guesses," however, the learned writer is generous. He grants the ancients three more. Plato, he thinks, touched the discoveries of the Law of Gravitation and the Circulation of the Blood, and he owns that "there is no single step in astronomy

so great as that of the nameless Pythagorean who first conceived the world to be a body moving round the sun in space." Such passages form a striking testimony to the truth of those ancient philosophies to which all mystical writers are fond of appealing as support for their belief and proof of its antiquity. Similar testimonies from the works of scholarship and science are not hard to find. Lange declares that in the dictum ascribed to Socrates, "Nothing can proceed out of nothing, and nothing can be annihilated," are contained two of the great doctrines of physics, namely, the Indestructibility of Matter and the Conservation of Force. Edward Clodd, in his "Pioneers of Evolution," mentions no less than ten instances in which ancient "speculations" made "an approach to modern theories." Professor Sayce tells us, "It is to Anaxagoras, to Heraclitus, to Xenophanes, that we owe those ideas of mind, of motion, of existence, which form the groundwork of modern science." Finally, remembering that motion is almost the last word of modern science,<sup>1</sup> we regard with awakened attention the saying of the old Egyptian Hierophants—"Action is the life of Ptah." It is to be questioned whether, in not realising and respecting the meaning of ancient learning and the suggestions of ancient mystic metaphors and symbols, science has not lost much valuable time. It has

<sup>1</sup> "It would seem that science reduces the universe to the intelligible concept of motion."—EDWARD CLODD, *Pioneers of Evolution*.

not advanced, save in practical and experimental illustration, much beyond "the Mysteries" even yet.

5. Mysticism is almost summed up in the Pythagorean triad of statements, "The law of Life is Evolution, the law of the Universe is Number, the law of God is Unity." The scientific verification that could at once be quoted in support of this utterance is patent at a glance. In the word "evolution" a modern note seems introduced which is difficult to tune to the homophony of the Greek origin of the phrase. But the translator<sup>1</sup> finds this word the best to describe the mathematical sequence implied in the whole phrase. The first two sections of the sentence ring true to our modern ears, and scarcely need support. Astronomy and mathematics walk hand in hand, and help one another to solve the mighty problems of the starry heavens. The mathematician it was who put his hand, so to speak, out into "the vastnesses of space" and laid it unerringly on the unseen but foreknown planet Neptune. The mathematician it is who can trace the orbits of the members of our system, the distance of the sun, and of those stars which give an annual parallax. The mathematician it is who can weigh the worlds and foretell the comets. Armed with "Number" the astronomer reads the skies.

The third section of the dictum rises into a sphere which science does not pretend to enter. Yet even

<sup>1</sup> Edouard Schüré, *Les Grands Initiés*.

here there are words of mathematicians on the subject of Unity which at least suggest that the sequence of thought is one which has haunted the mind of thoughtful men logically as well as spiritually.

“All comes from One, God embraces all, and actuates all, yet is but One,” said Pythagoras. Giordano Bruno, fallen on less happy times, almost repeats his words, “Understand, then, that all things are in the universe, and the universe in all things; us in that, that in us, and so all meet in one perfect Unity.” The great German philosophers repeat the idea a hundred times. “The Absolute, self-existent substance is God,” writes Spinoza, “everything else must be attributes and modes under which that substance appears. There can be no real existence outside. He is the universal All.” “The day of days, the great day of the feast of life,” says Emerson, always deeply imbued with Mysticism, “is that in which the inward eye opens to the unity of things.” The science of our day, if it ever approaches the idea of divinity, and holds its hand out in love and understanding toward religion, will surely do so in and through the sublime yet scientific path of number and unity. If it does so, it will be but treading the road Mysticism has passed along ages ago, even before the time when Zoroaster proclaimed “the number 3 reigns throughout the universe, and the monad is its principle.”

6. To come to later times, we may take some

of the despised studies of the alchemists, and the ideas they are credited with entertaining, and find that, after all, if we will but remember that they, of necessity and by choice, spoke in parable and wrote in cipher, their half-scientific, half-spiritual theories were not so foolish and fantastic as people have been apt to think. Stories of these strange and necromantic workers in the laboratories of the Middle Ages are familiar to us all. There are no more picturesque figures in history or romance than the alchemists. We really owe them a debt of gratitude, if only for their valuable contributions to the drama and picturesqueness of the world. Yet it is curious how little seems known about these men and their studies. The popular notion of them is, of course, a gross caricature. Some of our great novelists have tried to do justice to them, and have wrought some of their finest scenes round these characters. To the world of their own day they were enigmatical. Small wonder that after-ages find it hard to decipher their real features. Their language is almost unintelligible to the ordinary reader. Even students of their writings—"quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore"—often fail to remember that the text is in great part a cipher which can only be unlocked by the right key. Few have possession, it would seem, of that key. The alchemist nearly always kept dark in his sayings. His phraseology was clear to his brethren, but was

purposely and wilfully misleading to others. This subterfuge was adopted, doubtless, in self-defence; for the days of the great alchemists were days when it was dangerous to life and limb to speak of certain things. It must not be forgotten that the alchemists were men in whom, as a rule, religion and science were indissolubly joined. I think it may be asserted that their real quest was that of Divine Truth. It must also not be forgotten that the Ages of Faith in which they lived are equally well known as the Dark Ages. Flame and torture were busy. It was safer to talk of the transmutation of *metals* than the regeneration of the *soul* and *body*, in days when the slightest heresy meant the dungeon and the stake. *Salt*, and *sulphur*, and *mercury*, and the *White Eagle* and the *Red Lion*, were more convenient expressions than their spiritual equivalents. It cannot, of course, be for a moment asserted that the quest of every alchemist was after Divine things. Far from that. At the outset of this enquiry we faced the fact that occultism has an inversive and dark side, and the temptation to a “fall” is never greater than when phenomena are approached, and the desires of Self—self-knowledge, self-power, self-riches, self-gratification—are all ready to assert themselves and clamour for the upper hand. Small wonder if the “Art” of the alchemist was often “Black.”

Browning makes his Paracelsus “fall” as well

as "aspire." The spirit of the Middle Ages must be allowed to be somewhat alarming in every line of life. The *oubliette* seems always to yawn beneath the "castle bower"; torture chambers are discovered in most cathedrals and sacred edifices; the black plague had an unpleasant way of sweeping through the beautiful narrow streets, so dear to the lover of the picturesque. It was a gorgeous and a gruesome period. The alchemists were not better than their age.

We are apt to forget how much modern science owes to the alchemists. People smile over tales of the Bombast of Hohenheim, with his traditional fiend in the pommel of his sword, but they forget that he was the greatest chemist of his time, a wonderful physician, and the discoverer of hydrogen. Albertus Magnus, Nicholas Flamel, Van Helmont, Cornelius Agrippa, Roger Bacon, all these men were the leading lights of science in their days, and faithfully worked out its evolution. Against many of them their bitterest foes could bring no accusation of evil living. It is open to question whether Paracelsus was not much maligned. For centuries the history of practical scientific investigation is the history of magic. Magic is no very unscientific thing if the statements of Paracelsus and Van Helmont were true. "Determined Will," says the former, "is the beginning of all magical operations." (It reads just like a description of

hypnotism.) "The Will," says the latter, "is the first of all the powers." Nor does it seem to be an evil thing, if we may believe Cornelius Agrippa. He really writes about it like a St. Paul, for he asserts that "the magician who would acquire supernatural powers must possess Faith, Love, and Hope." The fact is, we moderns have got it fixed in our minds that all beneficent supernatural power passed away with the establishment of the Christian Church (it is a curious belief for Christians to hold), and that if it asserts itself at all in later times, it must be of and for evil. I touched on this point, however, in the earlier part of this Essay; and I pointed out that Mysticism held other views on the matter.

Impartially looked at, some of the despised theories of the alchemist are found to be worthy of notice. Take the Transmutation of Metals. The deep spiritual meanings of the phrase we need not touch on, although it was in these, as I believe, the real doctrine and meaning lay. But a truth on one plane was held to be true on all. That, to begin with, is not an unscientific theory. If (as they held) the body of man could be transmuted by grace into the temple of the Divine Spirit, then it was doubtless possible to work out the truth on much lower planes, and transmute base metals into gold, the elements of both being associated if not identical. Science laughs now at the gold-making dream of the Rosicrucian alchemists; and yet this transmutation of metals,

has it not some sort of expression under another name in the science of to-day? Surely some of the very passages I have already quoted in these pages tell us of equally amazing transmutations which can be effected. Air is now made into water ; and really, to the unassisted intelligence, that looks far liker to "magic" than to turn copper into gold. The chemist who says a thing is impossible is a bold man. If we wait awhile we may yet hear that our chemists have found out that the alchemists were not as wrong as has been thought, even in their most fantastic ideas.

This confession has already been accorded in one or two instances. One of their favourite assertions is that of the existence of a *materia prima*—a primordial essence, from which all things were originally made. I think one of the alchemistic names for this essence was Azoth. Now Professor Huxley (it is always pleasant to cite the adversary) says, in reference to the periodicity of atoms, and the sections and groups they form : "This is a conception with which biologists are very familiar : animal and plant groups constantly appearing as series of parallel modifications of similar yet different primary forms. In the living world facts of this kind are now understood to mean evolution from a common prototype. It is difficult to imagine that in the non-living world they are devoid of significance. Is it not possible, nay probable, that they may mean the evolution of

our 'elements' from a primary form of matter? Fifty years ago such a suggestion would have been scouted as *a revival of the dreams of the alchemists.*" This is hopeful to any one interested in Mysticism. To begin with, it permits the entertainment of the belief that the alchemists were right; and further, it implies that the time for "scouting" their theories is past. Years ago, Faraday said he believed that "in the end there will be found one element with two polarities." Since then unsuspected elements have been detected in the air,—the gas called argon, discovered by Lord Rayleigh, and helium, which was once supposed to be a peculiar possession of the solar atmosphere. We are getting on. Again we may find the alchemists were no foolish dreamers.

These illustrations have stretched themselves to greater length than I anticipated, and there are still many mystic theories I should like to have mentioned, as verified by modern discovery. But I must content myself with naming the point which further proves that some of the theories of Mysticism are in sympathy with the Biblical narrative, and that the Biblical narrative, thus interpreted, is more or less brought into relation with science.

The first chapter of Genesis, and its account of the Creation, has probably been argued over—historically, scientifically, and theologically—more fiercely than any part of the Bible. It has been—with some people it still is—a battlefield of hot dispute. A large number

of religious people regard it, curiously and questioningly, with a silence, or with a smile, not meant to be irreverent, but only intelligent, as something of considerable archaic interest—a something that, any and every way, in no way touches their personal belief and faith. A larger number possibly still accept it verbally and literally. Others examine it and argue over it with ecclesiastical and theological sanction and encouragement. The philosopher and the agnostic, I suppose, regard it calmly as a curious survival. The scientist presumably ignores it, or even laughs at its—to him—amazing and barbarous crudities. And some (we will hope but very few) would expunge it from a book which they think would stand in this modern world better, and with greater dignity, without such outworn and childish myths. Very few, indeed, one is minded to think, place a value on it, even above the more obviously valuable and often-quoted portions of the Pentateuch. Amongst, and foremost amongst, this small band (because he can give a reason for the faith that is in him) must be counted the earnest student of Mysticism. The mystic echoes the words of St. Jerome, and says with him, "The most difficult and the most obscure of sacred books—Genesis—contains as many secrets as words." It is clear that the much-talked-over first chapter is either a record of extraordinary and deep value and interest, or a curious collection of primitive myths, and an explanation of

the cosmography fitted to the childhood of our race. And one can imagine how a mind, unable to take refuge in unquestioning faith, and unwilling to find it in unquestioning acceptance of dogma, keenly alive to the grandeur of modern science, yet penetrated with the still greater grandeur of an outlook which claims the unseen as well as the seen —one can imagine, I say, how such a mind may have felt this first chapter of Genesis a terrible stumbling-block—an uncertain note struck at the outset of what it would fain consider a harmony.

It seems, therefore, a strange thing that amongst all the many arguments, *pro* and *con.* ranged in dispute over what is called “the Mosaic account of the Creation,”<sup>1</sup> but little notice has ever been taken of the theosophic theory of Cycles and Life-Waves. This theory has been stated in several occult books during the last few years ; but these books (as has been already noted) are often surrounded by a curious silence, and the theory seems to have escaped general observation. It is scarcely like to gain observation by one more brief and insignificant repetition, but the subject may interest the few readers of these pages.

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that the “Books of Moses” are a recollection made late in the history of the nation, at about 500 or 600 B.C., and that it is now thought that “Moses” himself was not only “learned in all the lore of the Egyptians,” but was an Egyptian priest of the royal house (see note later on). If so, the “Mosaic” account of the Creation is probably Egyptian in its origin, and is fraught with esoteric meaning and mystery.

The Cycles and Life-Waves are said to be parts of a theory which has been received, in some form or other, in occult science for a very long time. It is even claimed by some writers that they formed part of the knowledge given in the old Initiations. The matter is far too lengthy and intricate to be described here, save in the most cursory way. The broad outline alone can be given.

The cycles are supposed to explain the process of formation or creation in the history of our planet, and of all planets. And as they are said to have been in ceaseless operation for countless millions of years, so it is stated they are at work still, and will continue to work into the dimness of an inconceivable future, carrying out evolution to the point when the laws accomplish their own doom, only to recommence their operations again *ad infinitum*. The cycles are dependent on Polar motion—the double movement of the pole of the earth and the spiral that it makes in the “heavens” as the earth forges ahead on its path. The figures that represent the period of each “volute” of the pole, when added up, always make a numeral of the number nine, generally eighteen (a bit of old mystic numeration at which the modern thinker will smile). Briefly, for those unacquainted with this system, it may be stated that one revolution of the spiral made thus by the earth’s pole in the ethereal spaces is said to take about 2,592,000 years of our “planetary time”—

which period is called one Polar Day. This, it is stated, is the "Day" of the first chapter of Genesis. Further, there are seven Life-Waves which perform the circle of the planets in the solar system: each wave occupying one Polar Day for its action on the planet it touches, and then passing on to the next. The theory goes on to show that the first portion of the wave is the lowest point of its vitality and force. And it will be remembered that the wording in the Bible gives a curious and seemingly unreasonable inversion of terms, and states that "the evening and the morning were the First Day." Now, if we take the "evening" as meaning a low point of vitality (a very general belief), the order of the sentence takes a new significance.

It must be owned at starting that there are many points of difficulty and obscurity in the notion of these Life-Waves, and many flaws seem detectable at once. It is not for its unassailable application that the theory is so well worth notice as for its interest as an ancient idea of the cosmos, especially in connection with the Hebrew scriptures. The first and last of the Life-Waves seem, as far as I have read, to be unnamed; and there are, as in all old calculations, only seven planets spoken of. However, it is also observable that the unnamed Life-Waves have their appointed work, which gives their character, and for the system of seven planets, there is the theory of the Octave, well established in ancient

knowledge, wherein the eighth note echoes and in a sense repeats the first. Nor, indeed, is there anything hopelessly irreconcilable with truth in the idea that when the seven waves have accomplished their full cycle of work on a planet they pass away from it, leaving the planet to disintegrate and return to its primal condition, until the cyclic Life-Waves once more come round to work its evolution anew.

The first of the Waves is said to be Spirit, revealed or expressed in "Fire" and "Water"; "Fire" being Spirit, and "Water" otherwise called the "Astral Light." The fact that the first Life-Wave is said to be "Spirit" at once points to the mystical belief I have already noted that there is nothing but Spirit in the universe—Spirit in different and innumerable grades of expression. We may also observe in passing, that in this first Life-Wave appears the embryo, as it were, of the great mystery which rules the world—the mystery of Sex. For Fire and Water have always been held in mystic science to be the correlative elemental expressions of the masculine and feminine principles, the Spirit being Fire and the soul Water. This being so, it is but natural that the mystic should lay a very deep and wide significance on the use of these metaphors in the enunciation of the spiritual truth in the text, "*Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" In the constitution of humanity the Soul is always mysti-

cally spoken of as "Water"; and as the planet is held to be a complete macrocosm possessing a soul, there is a peculiar significance again in the statement that the "*Spirit of God* moved on the face of the *waters*."

The second Life-Wave is the Gaseous; the third, the Mineral; the fourth, the Vegetable; the fifth, the Animal; the sixth, the Human; and the seventh is figured as Divine Rest. There are seven Rounds of these seven Life-Waves to each complete cycle, each Round having seven other subdivisions. Thus the Human Life-Wave is said to have seven Root Races of Humanity in its evolution; each of these Root Races having further seven Families. The selected or "immortal" types of each Family, and finally of each Root Race, appear to outlive their cycles, up and on (a survival of the fittest), reincarnating in the new and higher race, and passing on to higher and higher developments until the highest type of the full cycle of the Seven Cycles is gained. It would then appear that the ascent into still higher states, planetary, celestial, or deific, lies open.

The vastness of these cycles involves periods of time (even in the one cycle of the seven revolutions) that would surely satisfy the astronomer, and even accord the claims of the geologist, while in their infinite renewal they almost may be said to exceed any outlook of science. For it is stated that the seven times seven "Rounds" make but forty-

nine cycles, and the fiftieth cycle is a period of rest, when the sun will "rest"—a solar Nirvana, so to speak—for a period of 127,008,000 years of our planetary computation: the grand period of the Seven Rounds of the Life-Waves themselves occupying, on that calculation, 1,006,064,000 years. After the "rest," the Life-Waves return to the worlds they have ebbed from, and the whole cycles recommence. This, as I have said, is supposed to go on *ad infinitum*.

Now, there is much here at which the scientist and the Churchman may smile, and much that is obviously crude in thought and disfigured by limitation and error. I have stated the theory also far too briefly and clumsily to represent it truly. Still, even so, I cannot but think it is worth knowing. It will be seen at a glance how singularly the cycles of Life-Waves and the "days" of creation tally one with another, and at the same time fuse into something-like correspondence with the revelations of science. Even the great period of rest has its echo in science, for I believe I am stating a theory that is received when I say that science prophesies the far-distant period when the whole solar system will, by the recoil of its own laws, become fixed and "at rest." "Not only our earth, but the solar system as well, has been what it is not at present; had at one time no existence as a system, and will one day cease to exist as such."<sup>1</sup> And to support the further theory

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Strauss, "Old Faiths and New."

of the Life-Waves returning and reorganising the whole system, Kant, in his "General History of the Theory of the Heavens," says that there is no reason why, if the earth could be once evolved out of chaos, it should not be able to be so evolved again. He calls the world "a phoenix which but consumes itself in order to rise rejuvenated from its ashes." Centuries ago Buddhism taught the universe was in a perpetual revolution of birth and decay. Brahmanism, with symbolisms of immemorial antiquity, teaches the same idea. In the Classic theogony Saturn devours his children. Leibnitz echoes the thought when he spake of Deity as "the primitive Monad, in a ceaseless state of expansion and contraction."

And we notice that science not only answers the idea of the solar "rest," but that it also carries out the belief that the planets are under various developments such as would be figured by the onward flow of the Life-Waves. "A gradation in respect of their comparative maturity," says Strauss, "is unquestionably observable among the members of the solar system; thus even the mighty whole of the cosmos resembles one of those tropical trees on which, simultaneously, here a blossom bursts into flower, there a ripe fruit drops from the branch." Thus astronomers tell us that probably the mighty orb of Jupiter is still partially incandescent, and that the other giant planets beyond it are in the earlier

conditions of planetary evolution, whilst, on the other hand, many reasons have been urged for the supposition that Mars is in a higher state of "civilisation" than our earth. To take the theory of the cycles of the Life-Waves literally, and to suppose that Mysticism claims for it any finality of truth, would be, of course, to do it wrong. Such theories must always be open to interpretation. They are always a veil.

It is also worth noticing that the cycles of these Life-Waves correspond in idea, if not in exact number and expression, with the Divine Years and the system of cycles and numbers as held in the Yoga philosophy of India.

These examples of ancient mystic thought, even reviewed thus briefly and superficially, are sufficient to show the points in view—namely, that modern thought and discovery have corroborated rather than weakened them, and that Mysticism has a true welcome for the "facts" of science.

## VII

The reign of bigotry and persecution is, we may fairly hope, passing away for our cycle. Even during the last fifty years there has been a slight sensible diminution of intolerance in the centres of civilisation. Fanaticism and denunciation are indeed still cruel of hand and loud of voice: doubt-

less they will always be a power (in this "Round"), but they no longer hold the undisputed rule they once possessed. With the gradual and tardy drawing off of the shadows of the Dark Ages—shadows that have lingered on late into the dawn of the Modern Age—may come the fulness of the new day which some occultists tell us has dawned on the world, bringing with it a light and a liberty in which all the many lines of thought which approach the veiled and central idea of Mysticism may be raised out of much that has seemed to the world dark and turgid, and be brought into relation with lines of thought from which they now seem far away. More and more the world appears to be longing and looking for some line of fusion and unity, wherein all the severed, and at present apparently often antagonistic, schools of thought and aspects of life may find some harmony. "We need now," says Mr. Frederick Harrison in his *Essay on "The Connection of History,"* "harmony, order, union . . . some common basis of belief—some object for the imperishable religious instincts and aspirations of mankind—some faith to bind the existence of man to the visible universe around him. . . . We need to extract the essence of all older forms of civilisation, to combine them and harmonise them into one." The Churches of Christendom would, no doubt, advance to claim the power to do all these things for the world; but which Church would

accept all its sister Churches, or be willing to offer "some common basis of belief," sufficient for acceptance and love, to all other forms of creed outside Christianity? A Church can scarcely expect the lay world to receive the offer of its "common basis of belief," when, in its own field, the unity of the Churches of Christendom is still a problem that gives no hope of practical solution.

Seldom in this cycle's known history, one is minded to think, has there been greater need of "a common basis of belief." Mysticism, meanwhile, stands unregarded in our midst, and speaks aloud for those who have the ears to hear. Accepting all creeds and beliefs in their places, perceiving the same Revelation and Truth in each, in varying degrees and modes of evolution, fitted to the time and place; welcoming all the knowledge, all the daring thought, and all the patient discovery which have led so many searchers after truth into agnosticism or unbelief; extracting "the essence of all older forms of civilisation"; the Mystic is surely able to perceive that possible line of "harmony, order, union" in life and the world around him which—by their own confession—neither philosopher nor theologian nor scientist has yet been able to point out.

The faith of Mysticism does indeed offer a common basis of belief to all creeds and peoples: it enshrines, consecrates, and instructs "the imperish-

able religious instincts and aspirations of mankind.” Its sublime, and at the same time scientific, creed (if that can be called a creed which is never dogmatic) pre-eminently binds “the existence of man to the visible universe around him.” It has never burnt its Brunos, nor forced its Galileos to recant their honest convictions. It does not know heresy since it does not possess dogma. Nor does it find evolution a dangerous or questionable article of faith. There is no aspect of nature, no outlook into the universe, no enigma of social life and human passion, no discovery of the historian or the man of science, for which it has not welcome and acceptance. “I am persuaded that a day will come in which the physiologist, the poet, and the philosopher will speak the same language and will understand one another.”<sup>1</sup>

The Unity to which all those who love “the Kingdom of God” look with hope and a great longing may be found by the world some day, and at last, in the despised and rejected Faith that has always literally believed that that Kingdom is eternally one with Him who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

<sup>1</sup> Claude Bernard.

THE  
ILLUSION OF REALISM

“What again shall we say of the actual acquirements of knowledge?—is the body, if invited to share in the enquiry, a hinderer or a helper? I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not, as the poets are always telling us, inaccurate witnesses? And yet, if even they are inaccurate and indistinct, what is to be said of the other senses? for you will allow they are the best of them. . . . Then, when does the soul attain truth? for in attempting to consider anything in company with the body, she is obviously deceived. . . . Then must not existence be revealed to her in thought if at all?”—PLATO, *Phædo*.

“I do not argue against the existence of any one thing that we can apprehend, either by sense or reflection. That the things I see with mine eyes and touch with my hands do exist, really exist, I make not the least question. The only thing whose existence we deny is what philosophers call matter, or corporeal substance. And in doing this, there is no damage done to the rest of mankind, who, I dare say, will never miss it.”—BERKELEY, *Principles of Human Knowledge*.

“They do but grope in learning’s pedant round  
Who on the phantasies of sense bestow  
An idol substance.”

—NEWMAN.

“We all have in us a hidden life, a secret consciousness, a second sight, and, as it were, a superior soul—sometimes unknown to our best friends, and often misknown to ourselves; but which in reality watches over and directs our destinies. It suffers, it lives, it fights, by its own innate individuality; and if it succeeds in liberating itself, it is nearly always independently of our exterior life, and in the face of the crushing force of Realism.”—EDOUARD SCHÜRF, *La Vie Mystique*.

## II

### THE ILLUSION OF REALISM

THE word *Realism* has been a popular and oft-repeated one during the last twenty years or so. For its origin doubtless we must look much farther back. Probably it was used first in philosophic phraseology as opposed to Nominalism. In ecclesiastical history also we read of disputes between the Socinians and the Realists. But in these modern days it is as an artistic phrase that the word is best known. It became popularised as the name of a doctrine in Art—by no means a new one, but one that was emphasised with all the enthusiasm of novelty and the attractive aspect of a revelation. Annexed thus by the artistic world, it became associated in most people's minds chiefly with painting and literature, as representing an unshrinking facing of the “facts of life,” and an unswerving fidelity to their outward presentment. As a phase of art it is said to be already somewhat old-fashioned and “out of date.” Many methods have sprung up since Realism was proclaimed to be the last word of the

studios. But Realism, even in the modern sense in which I use the term, always in truth had a wider field of operation than that of the schools of art. The pen and pencil, the chisel and the brush, were some of the most obvious, but not perhaps the most important of its vehicles. It is probable that the movement in art known as "Realism" was but one expression of a widespread and far-reaching impetus of thought in the direction indicated by the name. Certainly the realistic spirit cannot be said to be an exclusive possession of any particular section of the world in these days. It is broadcast, and has been a marked feature in the life of our era. We may, therefore, fairly take the word in its modern sense, but irrespective of its artistic limitation.

In this wider interpretation the illusiveness of the word itself, and the serious illusions of the attitude of mind it indicates and the things it dignifies with a misnomer, grow into importance and give rise to many thoughts.

Words have a splendid and incorruptible way of telling the truth, and so it is well to look at this word *Realism* at the outset. The line of words of the formation of *real* give their own meaning plainly. We can instantly quote for ourselves plenty of examples: *prim-al*, *physic-al*, *materi-al*, *caus-al*, *phantasm-al*, *spiritu-al*, &c., &c. The form and meaning of each word is clear and simple. And so we find that *real* deals in its root *re* with *res*—the Thing, not the

material part of it, or the phantasmal or phenomenal, or any appearance of it, but the Thing itself. Realism, then, should be an expression which claims to give the reality, the essence, of the thing contemplated.

Our estimate of the truth of this claim, as brought forward by realism, must entirely depend on our own conviction as to what is or is not "real."

The expression of realism, alike in art and thought of any kind, is one which bases itself on the truth of the testimony given by our senses—what we see, what we hear, what we touch, what we feel. If we accept this testimony as our best proof of what is real, then Realism will make good its claim to its own name, and to our admiration and respect; but if we search for our reality in that which too often eludes the senses, then to us this same realism will be the most unsatisfying and the least true of things, and the name the greatest of forgeries. To such amongst us as take this view, the true word for the realism of to-day is Materialism. It is well that this word is beginning to be frankly used by the world in certain directions; but it is an honest word, and stands self-convicted of limitation. We none of us, doubtless, care to accept our limitations, and so the great school and doctrine of appearances calls itself Realism.

The appropriation and use of this word is in itself an audible confession of faith as to what views the

speaker holds on the subject of reality. As this confession of faith is one that, beyond question, would be readily endorsed by a large section of the world, we may fairly ponder over our views of the subject.

Truly no question seems fraught with vaster or more immediate issues. It involves the very roots of life, this question as to reality. One stands for the moment abashed and awed before it. Have not the greatest and wisest of all ages sought to answer it? And yet, must we not all, down to the least thoughtful and humblest-conditioned, answer it practically, if unconsciously, in our lives, each for himself as best he can? It is a necessity of living—one of the conditions of the game of life. We must have some sort of conviction of what reality is, and what is or is not real; and doubtless a large number of comfortable folks find the conviction in the realism of the senses—find it, and neither ask nor desire anything more. For others, no conviction of reality, in any final or faith-worthy character, exists anywhere; and, by an irony of fate that is often busy in such matters, such men and women are often found in the foremost rank of realism—Pyrrhonic realists, who in reality say there is none, not even a final discovery of the illusion.

The greatest voices the world has heard have given us ideas and conceptions of reality curiously far removed from any attitude of realism. Plato

tells us that ideas are the only "truly existing things," material things being but the appearance in substance and materialisation of those ideas. The reality of a thing is the creative idea of it—the "exemplary cause of it," as Zenocrates called it, not the illusive corresponding appearance or expression of it—an appearance that, even in the case of substantial objects, is momentarily, if imperceptibly, altering and passing away even whilst we quote it as a reality. "Matter is only a sensuous seeming, and spiritual essences are the only real things in the world," was asserted by Lossius; and in 1893 we find in Mr. Bradley's lectures on "Appearance and Reality" the confession that "outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality: and the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real." This doctrine, still strong with imperishable youth, still unwelcome and almost unknown to the world, is of immemorial age.

It is at the heart of every faith, and is written in every scripture. The "Bagavad Gîtâ" and the "Vedas," the "Avesta" and the "Book of the Dead," assert with one voice that the things of the spirit alone are real. The various schools of philosophy which flourished in Greece, in Rome, and in Alexandria agreed in this, at least—that phenomena are transitory and illusive. The Christian Church has always followed its Founder in

telling man that the realisation of the whole world were profitless in comparison with the Reality that is within him. And when, awakening from the long arrest of thought in the Dark Ages, philosophy again began to move forward—after one brief outburst of natural materialism in the Cartesian reality of matter—the great thinkers, and notably the group of illustrious German philosophers from Spinoza<sup>1</sup> to Schopenhauer, soon showed that, however far removed one from another they might be in their deductions, they were at one in accepting the premise that appearances are in no sense real.

To the mind which has not accustomed itself by inward perception, or by the exercise of technical information, to this idea of the unreality of appearances, the sober statement that the world in which we live, and the things perceived by our senses, are unreal, seems startling, and even ridiculous—a thing impossible and bordering on insanity. It is difficult to see the grave difference between non-

<sup>1</sup> "Mr. Lewes has well pointed out that had Spinoza used the Greek word *Noumenon* instead of the Latin word *Substans*, a great deal of unnecessary confusion would have been spared. Whenever we come across the word 'substance' we must remember he does not intend us to understand matter or anything to do with matter, but that instead he intends to convey to our minds the idea of the *Noumenon* or Reality which pervades and underlies matter and all external nature; the immanent, instead of the extraneous, principle of the universe; the one pervading Reality, of which all phenomena are but transitory and fleeting modes."—C. E. PLUMPTRE, *The History of Pantheism*.

reality and non-existence. Bishop Berkeley works these difficulties and objections out in more lucid style than almost any other philosophic writer of our speech. "It will be objected," he says, "that by the foregoing principles all that is real and substantial in Nature is banished out of the world, and instead thereof a chimerical scheme of ideas takes place. All things that exist, exist only in the mind—that is, they are purely notional. What, therefore, becomes of the sun, moon, and stars? What must we think of houses, rivers, mountains, trees, stones—nay, even of our own bodies? Are all these but so many chimeras and illusions in the fancy? To all which I answer, that by the principles premised we are not deprived of anything in Nature. Whatever we see, feel, hear, or anywise conceive or understand, remains as secure as ever, and is as real as ever. There is a *rerum natura*, and the distinction between realities and chimeras retains its full force." Doubtless this line of argument will never have many professed followers.

And yet, is it not a curious fact that in the living world, in the daily acceptance of life by the mass of people, the great reality of ideas and the utter unreality and illusive character of appearances is practically accepted and carried out with unquestioning acquiescence? The great realities of life to the world at large, what are they but those unseen forces which mould our life? Our

hold on one another and on the social organisation of life, whereby and wherein our daily life and well-being consists, all our deeper relations with those around us, are they not in essence immaterial, spiritual, real in the true sense (the very reverse of the sense in which we generally use the word), involving Thought and the Unseen as the great realities? What are Love, and Hope, and Courage, and Faith, and Sympathy, and Jealousy, and Doubt, and Fear? What is the Memory that moves us so deeply? what the Purpose that holds us so strenuously to some aim in life? It is not to the point to enquire if these things are spiritual in the deeper sense, or merely the result of certain workings of the brain-cells and centres of our organic system. Whatever they are, they have no "appearance,"—they are unreal in the sense of having no appeal to those senses which are the standard and test of Realism. For all the world, after all, even for the materialistic, realistic world, the real principalities and powers of life are Love and Thought. Even the tangled and apparently wholly physical growth and action of passion strikes its roots deeper than appearances, and has a vitality that physiology cannot wholly unravel.

We all of us live and move and have our being, not in what is seen and "real" in the parlance of the world, but in the things we cannot see; just

the very things we laugh at the philosopher for calling the realities. The veriest sensualist lives for and in the senses which he enjoys, and not in and for the things enjoyed. *They* are not even *his* realities. Let the sense that uses them fail, and they are the most mocking and cruel of illusions to him, even when he still clings to them as realities. The great words of the Great Teacher are true with an appalling truth. Whatever our heaven may be, be it but a fool's paradise and a dream, its kingdom is within us. It is not in the external things which we think are its realities. If Nature, with her thousand voices, and life, with all its daily lessons, fail to tell us of the reality of things not seen, the unreality of things we see, death at least, with ruthless and irrefutable logic, should show us how little the man and the appearance of the man are one.

In these days, when a knowledge of the results of science are in great measure accessible to us all, it is always interesting to turn and ask its witness to the truth of a theory before us. In this case the witness is speedily found. It is only so universal that it is difficult to know which special instance to quote. In these pages a dozen passages from scientific writers are given which might well be cited here.<sup>1</sup> Science tells us, with reiteration, that the

<sup>1</sup> Edward Clodd, Dr. Draper, Herbert Spencer, Camille Flammarion, Sir Robert Ball, &c.

evidence of our senses is seldom trustworthy, and is never final. The illusion is oftentimes twofold, for not only is the thing seen a mere "appearance"—a "correlation of numberless forces and reflections, molecular changes, and subtle predispositions acquired and inherited"—but the very "appearance" itself is actually delusive and misleading. The reality is an exact reverse of the appearance. Realism would have told us that the sun moves round the earth, rises, and sets. The illusion of the appearance is complete. The ray of light which strikes us *now* started on its tremendous journey from the sun more than eight minutes ago. The stars we see to-night may every one have ceased to exist, some of them centuries, and even æons ago. There is nothing in the whole scope of bodily sensation and perception that is not a "deceiving appearance," with some unseen force behind it, which, if not final, is at least nearer to reality than the appearance we call "real." Such instances we often accept with all the cheap dignity and willingness of one who receives *gratis* something he would never have worked or paid for himself; but we fail to carry the analogy, with all its suggestive thought, into other matters.

Heraclitus of old pronounced eye and ear alike to be false witnesses, and saw in continuous and apparently fixed conditions of being only an eternal flux. Seneca says: "No one is to-day what he was

yesterday. Our bodies change as streams do, and everything flows away, as time does; nothing endures." This was the opinion of Heraclitus: "The name of the stream endures—the water runs away." Yet these great philosophers of old perhaps scarcely realised what now we know: that the eternal change and flux of things is but a part of their illusiveness—the things themselves (as, for example, the water of the stream that is "running away") being but phenomena capable of infinite transmutation and resolution into constituent parts. "Everything looks permanent until its secret is known;" but "permanence is a word of degrees; everything is medial."<sup>1</sup> To him who would build his creed on appearances, the world—the universe—is one great snare for delusion.

The perception, indeed, of this fact alters all life to him who gains it. It is in the region of Thought a Copernican discovery. It reconstructs our idea of the universe. The sunset and the dawn recur the same as ever; day and night reassert their sequence. Only we find that it is the earth which is revolving round the sun, and not the sun which is revolving around us. Does the thought seem unimportant?<sup>2</sup> To my mind the importance cannot be overstated.

<sup>1</sup> Emerson.

<sup>2</sup> Extraordinary as it sounds to say so, the matter *is* of little import to some people. Rossetti has left it recorded that he cared nothing for such truths! So strangely does realism, *i.e.* contentment and satisfaction in appearances, assert itself sometimes.

It is nothing short of a birth into a new world. Its correspondences with life and all the deepest questions of life are vital. The difference between the appearance and the reality in such a case is literally a new heaven and a new earth. But it is evident that all such truths, carried to their true issues and analogies, strike a deeper note than the world as a rule cares to hear. "Few men," says Goethe, "have imagination enough for the truth of Reality."

The thought involved in its reception is unwelcome to people who live in and for appearances—as we must confess most people do. Nay, it is even unwelcome oftentimes to the scholar and the artist, for the professionalism of the schools and the academies may be the be-all and end-all of both learning and art. It is unwelcome to all who would fain live in the external fairness and beauty of things—the colour, the form, the song, the warmth, the emotion. Appearances can be so dignified with great and sounding names, with such authority of the letter of the law and the consensus of opinion; with such fine and convincing theories, and such an appeal to pulsating human life; they can, moreover, so completely fill all life to us, that many never care to question their reality. And let it be confessed that the detection of the illusion, though it be a step on the real road to truth and sanity, is—like all such steps on the spiritual road

upward and onward—attended with danger. He who would see the unreality of things the world calls real should guard his steps well, lest they lead him to worse illusions than those of a sanely material, or even of a frankly sensuous world. Of the crisis that arises in the mind when the veil of illusion lifts itself I need not speak. But it is necessarily a crisis that brings a great light or a great darkness. “Of the terrible doubt of appearances,” Walt Whitman has sung, as have many poets and seers. Of the sight of realities beyond them we have many songs also. And the song of the poet and the seer at that Beatific Vision must always be a hymn of initiation and of triumph. But the initiation and the triumph are not gained without a struggle or without danger faced and conquered.

Men of science, one thinks, ought to be the last to believe in “realistic” thought of any kind. And yet we often find them emphatically believers in a realism of their own. The elementary realism of the world at large they do indeed reject and pass beyond. Appearances are reduced to their last tenuity for them. They follow “life” back to the cell and protoplasm, and trace it up to the point where the arrest of the body asserts itself in man. But it seems to the observer as if science were often quite willing to stop at these points and accept them as finalities for us. That mysterious something which

fronts us alike in the formation of the amoeba or of the human brain is just the part of the question that interests us dwellers outside the magic circle of science—interests us in a way we refuse to have belittled or labelled with a name, and so disposed of. To us it would seem that the lowest or the highest—the densest or the most ethereal—the first step taken or the last in sight—is but a question of degree; and to stop at any step of the road and pronounce it final or satisfying is but to accept Realism after all, and to rest contented with an appearance.

But of all forms of this widespread realism there is none more illusive or more perennial than that of a certain order of religious belief. It is difficult to speak of the subject without giving offence where one would far liever give sympathy and assurance of understanding. The conventional religionism I refer to deserves, indeed, small respect or consideration in and for itself, but—with one of the many contradictions of human nature—those who hold it often deserve not only consideration, but respect as well. Without offence, however, one may contemplate the strange illusion of the religious position that fights to the death for verbal accuracy and literal interpretations of scriptures in which it is distinctly asserted that the “letter” kills; or the realism that delights in ceremonial for its own sake. Form and definiteness are strangely attrac-

tive to most people in all religion, and the realistic attitude of thought can supply both in generous measure.

A resolute outline and capacity seem to argue to many a good proof of a homogeneous inward substance. The desire to materialise, to personify and embody, is, we all know, the great and besetting temptation to all religious cults. It is the key to the deterioration and decay of many a faith. The phrase "a firm faith," as often means that the faith has a firm material body as that it is firmly assured of a living spirit.

It would appear that the highest forms of the religious temper, and the highest examples of spiritual insight, have always been of the incorporeal and immaterialised kind. They have been essentially mystical and unconventional; they have often seemed to be daringly indifferent to the seen, dangerously percipient of the unseen: for ever trying to pierce the appearance and face the reality. To such natures a realism in religious faith must always be the most abject of illusions. It is noticeable that the only words of scathing scorn that passed the lips of Him in Judaea of old who had words of mercy and acceptance for all were directed at those who were the followers of this realistic theology—this consecration of ecclesiastical appearances. Such a realism is in truth the Hindoo Maya—Illusion: the world of sense that hides the real

world of spirit. To the truly religious and spiritual mind, the witness of the senses, even in their highest degree, is very fallacious. "Men who form their judgment upon sense often err," writes Thomas à Kempis. Holy writings in all ages have consistently emphasised the unreality of the earthly witness and symbol, unless the eye sees the realities beyond.

"We see as we have eyes to see" is a proverbial truth that seems at once to undermine the standpoint of realism, not so much from the region of reality that may lie beyond, as from the region of illusion in which the realist himself is placed. It hints that appearances are themselves a variable and uncertain quantity. Their character, and certainly their appeal, seem to lie more in the eye that sees them than in their own consistence. Do any two people "see" one object exactly the same? In one sense, of course, they cannot do so at the same time, since the difference in the point of view that lies between two people standing even close side by side is perceptible and affects the presentation of the thing seen.

There is a wonderful and searching parable in this, if the world would but remember it. No two people in the world, to follow Heraclitan thought, can ever see exactly the same thing. To do so would necessitate identity of point of view with identity of moment of sight, and these are impos-

sible. The analogy explains a good many things and differences of opinion in life. But who is there who actually and consistently realises the analogy? There is even a truth in the further elaboration of the thought that to see a thing with the rounded and life-like truth of our full vision, we must in ourselves see it at once from two points of view; and though the angle of the parallax that lies between our two eyes is very small, yet it increases as the object is brought near—a feature well known in optics. It were well if it were recognised in ethics and other matters. But the difference between the vision of A and B may be yet greater than this—more than a mere change of position and time. It is difficult to gain any proof of such difference, since there is no standard, and the same terms may mean very different things in different speakers' minds. In the perception of colour it seems pretty evident that we differ strangely; and we know that colour in itself is not an objective and primary fact, but the result of many forces finally transmitted through the eye to the brain. "Colour is not a property of the thing seen; it is a sensation produced in us by that thing."<sup>1</sup>

And it is evident that although the undulations and complex movements which transmit the force to our eyes may in all cases be identical, the

<sup>1</sup> A. Balfour, "The Foundations of Belief."

apparatus of sight which receives and transmutes them into what we call colour may be surely of varying power and receptivity. The extraordinary differences of opinion and expression about colour, the marked diversity of perception of it which is observable in painters, who record to the best of their abilities the impressions of colour which they receive, can scarcely be explained on any other supposition than that in this matter "we see as we have eyes to see." Turner's famous speech to the lady who objected to the colouring he had depicted on his canvas as being unreal, is in truth the only answer that can be given. "I do not see anything like that in Nature!" "Don't you wish you did?" The whole matter lay in that. She did not see it; he did. Any one who loves colour, and endeavours to train and educate his eye to perceive it, must have noticed how perceptibly the "sense of colour" grows, like any sense that is trained. "We see as we have eyes to see." Ruskin has given us some very fine and memorable passages on this subject.

But perhaps we find the final argument that proves what we may call the illusiveness of colour in the experiments which have been made with the solar spectrum. By these we learn that the colour we see in an object, and by which we describe it, is, in deeper truth, the very colour

it does not possess. The colour exhibited is the rejected ray. The green leaf is green because it has received and kept every ray except the green, and that ray is therefore thrown back; white shows that the object so distinguished has refused all the rays; black is the reception of all. The realisation of these facts alters the complexion of our belief in the realism of colour: they show us, in fact, the reality that lies behind all colours by a true knowledge of their seeming illusions. Illusion ceases when it recognises it.

Colour, then, is so obviously an uncertain quantity that few people will resist the thought of its illusiveness; but form may seem a more objective and substantial matter. It requires, therefore, a subtler perception to discern that it, too, is a mere appearance. Its material expression is not volatile like colour, and it cannot be gravely suggested, even for a moment, that form is a momentarily fluctuating and undulating thing. If it be classed as non-real, it must be in the same sense in which Berkeley argues the unreality of substance. Form, in fact, is—so to speak—the outline of substance, the edges where its condition ceases. But it is probable, not only by Berkeleian philosophy, but by experimental demonstration, that substance is not a reality, and is merely a condition, and at the densest is non-solid. If, then, substance itself is but conditional, form is still

more conditional, since it is but a passing expression of the substance. Form is a reality, of course, in one sense, just as time and place are real. But in that perception of reality in which time and place are seen to be the first and last of illusions, form is also seen to be a thing that only realism can accept as real. The man of science now rises to the point at which, in thought, time and place cease to have any meaning;<sup>1</sup> and certainly, to the world at large, form itself, with all its outline of definite proportions, is not held more real than the conditions of time and place.

Yet he who believes that the things which the world, with its many forms of realism, calls real, are but appearances, veiling and revealing the real, is no despondent dreamer wandering in a phan-

<sup>1</sup> "Our conception of Nature should embrace time as well as space. In space we see across millions and millions of miles ; in time we may travel back through centuries and millions of centuries. Our position and our time are important to us, but they are absolutely nothing to Nature, for here there is nothing absolute but infinity and eternity. . . . The moon is the world of yesterday ; the earth is the world of to-day ; Jupiter is the world of to-morrow. The idea of time is thus fixed on our minds like that of space, but the law of the plurality of worlds rules for ever. . . . It is we who say *yesterday* and *to-morrow* ; for Nature it is always *to-day*."—FLAMMARION, *Popular Astronomy*.

I need scarcely say that these considerations about form and colour are in no sense meant to apply to *artistic* realism. It is obvious that art must accept the finality of both form and colour. The facts are only stated to form arguments against the spiritual and mental realisms of the world—arguments borrowed from the natural world of phenomena, often spoken of as real.

tasmal and delusive world. For him the boundaries that mark the sanities of this life, the healthful perception of the separate senses, the healthful exercise of their functions, the acceptance and commerce of the necessary conditions of civilised social life, the great established laws of right and wrong, are all as clear as ever they can be to the earnest realist or the simple, childlike "believer." They are, indeed, clearer, for they not only hold their own truths, but reveal the presence of the deeper truth that consecrates them. He knows that all these things are absolutely true, and absolutely real in their degrees. They are no delusions. The illusion lies, he holds, in the way the realist regards all appearances—not in the appearances themselves. They are real in so far, and in as long, as we are placed amid them, ourselves the centre of them,—to learn of them, to rule them—

"To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—to endure!

The man taught enough by life's dream of the rest to make sure!"<sup>1</sup>

He sees in them the reality that shines brighter as each veil of appearance rises. The sunshine is not less "real" to the man of science who knows that its light and warmth are, in one sense, illusions, than it is to the child who never questions what it is, but takes its heat and beauty and rejoices. Life

<sup>1</sup> Browning, "Saul."

is not less real to the man who knows it is, in the same sense, an illusion, than it is to him whose creed is as the child's acceptance of the sunshine. The man who sees all things as appearances that at once veil and reveal realities attains in that vision a true science and a true sanity. For him, as far as may be and is possible in existing conditions, illusion, as such, ceases. To no one is the sunshine so bright and so health-giving, or the cloud so necessary and inevitable a part of the sunshine it veils. The illusion of life is his assurance of its reality: to look on it as his reality were to him an inconceivable and unbearable delusion—a creed of dust and ashes. And to him the attitude of thought and mind represented in Realism is, therefore, the one attitude, the one "gospel" he fights and denounces—for to him it represents the real illusion of the world.

Our age has been often called a "realistic age." It would truly seem in many ways to deserve this definition. Many influences have brought about the spirit of modern realism. The advance of luxury, with all its appeals to the senses; the spread of a superficial learning, which breaks down old-fashioned reverence of awe, but does not go far enough to build up a new reverence of knowledge; the worship of physical beauty for its own sake; the dogmatism of the faith that distrusted the New Science; the equal dogmatism of the New Science that disliked faith; all these things would go to

produce the widespread realism we have seen around us in the world. In Art such a spirit becomes obvious beyond escape of notice. But in a sense it is essentially a mark of the inartistic temperament. It seems difficult to imagine a really great artist who is a pure realist. The world's insight in such matters is not penetrating, and above all things the world loves a label. It has, therefore, tied on the label of "realist" to artists and writers who are in heart seers and poets, although their mode of expression and method of representation may be relentlessly drawn from the life. Whilst, to preserve a fine balance of inaccuracy, it has called other artists and writers "idealists," who, in truth, never go beyond the appearance of things, and under a surface of decorative fancy and design, of symbolic names and a romantic *mise-en-scène*, are mere realists.

It does not seem to have occurred to the world at large, moreover, that realism finds its greatest number of followers and shows its strongest encampments in the fields of Thought, Science, and Religion. But it is cheering to discern signs here and there of a new order of thought arising, or shall we not say, of a return to the truer order of thought? One sign is notable. It was in the ranks of Art the expression, as a popular one, arose. It is in the ranks of Art we notice some of the most distinct indications of a reaction. By many voices

and in many directions it would appear the world is becoming conscious of the illusion of Realism, and is setting itself again to look deeper toward reality: "Our question lies with the ideal reality that exists behind appearance."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a letter from Plotinus to Flaccus.

THE  
LINES OF COINCIDENCE

"This universe—ah me!—what could the wild man know of it? what can we yet know? That it is a force and thousand-fold complexity of forces. . . . Force, force, everywhere force: we ourselves a mysterious force in the centre of that. There is not a leaf rotting on the highway but has force in it: how else could it rot?"—CARLYLE.

"The study of 'mysterious' phenomena leads to the recognition of important laws."—Dr. ALBERT MOLL.

"There is no such thing as chance; and what seems to us merest accident springs from the deepest sources of destiny."—SCHILLER.

"All nature is but art unknown to thee:  
All chance, direction which thou canst not see."

—POPE.

### III

## THE LINES OF COINCIDENCE

### I

FEW people, one may safely assert, pass through life without experiencing certain events, or "occurrences of thought," for which no better name is to be found than Coincidences. Some people seem to be peculiarly distinguished by such experiences. They are, as Emerson puts it, "made up of rhyme, coincidence, omen, periodicity, and presage: they meet the person they seek: what their companion prepares to say to them, they first say to him: and a hundred signs apprise them of what is to befall." To all of us, even of unrhythmic nature, circumstances will occasionally arise—outward event and inward thought—sympathies and antipathies—sometimes in a matter of importance and sometimes in the most trivial and commonplace routine of daily life—which strike us as being at once unaccountable and significant. We are conscious of a sense of unseen correspondence, where none apparently exists; of prevision,

of echo, of something which at least demands other explanation than that which is afforded by casualty, or the law and logic of everyday life as they are gathered up in the colloquial use of the word *Coincidence*.

The meanings applied to this word are many. They cover a field that ranges almost from the "Divinity that shapes our ends" to a chance untempered by any considerations, divine or otherwise. Our modern Chance seems the apotheosis of Agnosticism. The Pagan world gave it a firmer outline. "Even the works of chance," writes Marcus Aurelius, "are not without dependence on Nature." But in our superstitious fear of superstition we have seized on the words *coincidence* and *chance*, and, in defiance of etymology, emptied them of all meaning. Coincidence has become one of the favourite fetishes of science and of popular scepticism. As Madame Blavatsky humorously puts it, "For coincidences our friends the sceptics appear to have an unappeasable appetite." And the curious part of the business is, that it appears to be considered by many people, who would in other matters be the first to use words carefully, that when anything is labelled with this word—Coincidence—it is thereby placed beyond the region of intelligent interest. Why? Is the meaning of the word forgotten, or is it ignored?

For when we consider the word in its derivative signification, we find it is not far removed from the

notion of absolute law. In the shorter form of *incidence* it enters the region of pure science.<sup>1</sup> In logic the whole word *coincidence* is often used.<sup>2</sup> It may be said, when we come to look at it seriously, to be positively mathematical in its meaning. In physics and optics *incident* and *incidence* are terms of frequent and important use. The *angle of incidence*, the *line of incidence*, the *ray* and the *point of incidence*, are expressions familiar to us all. Surely this suggests, to say the least of it, a line of thought diametrically opposed to anything haphazard or savouring of the nature of blind irrational chance. The word, rightly considered, strikes a note of cause and effect. It seems to involve some starting-point of impetus, some foreseen point of contact, an initial velocity or force for those lines or bodies that are to meet or strike a given plane coincidentally. It is, therefore, strange that a coincidence should be regarded, not only by the casual speaker, but by men of exact thought and careful vocabulary, as something confessedly outside the region of law; and that in using the word it should be held that the thing so described is deprived of all its mystery or possible meaning. “A mere coincidence!” It is a

<sup>1</sup> “In equal incidences there is a considerable inequality of refractions.”—NEWTON.

<sup>2</sup> “The want of exact coincidence between these two notes is an inherent imperfection in the musical scale.”—WHEWELL.

“Christianity teaches nothing but what is perfectly coincident with the ruling principles of a virtuous man.”—SOUTH.

delightful label. But what does it mean? What does it mean notably to those who keep a plentiful supply of the labels always on hand? A cast of the dice—no more? Nothing more: save, it may be, occasionally in some weak and too-imaginative minds, an unpleasing suspicion that the dice are loaded.

It is not my purpose to do more than glance at some of the aspects Coincidence presents to us to-day, or has assumed in the past. To enter into such a subject in any way would demand the proportions of a volume and the information of a scholar. It opens a field of research rather than of suggestion; and it is suggestion alone, and that in but elementary form, I desire to touch.

Nothing in the world, as far as we see, is other than the work of fixed and absolute law. The law is not in all cases yet discovered, in many is scarcely apprehended; but its existence is not for a moment doubted or questioned. "Everything which pertains to the human species, considered as a whole, belongs to the order of physical facts." Such is the statement of the great Flemish astronomer and mathematician, Quetelet. Physical facts are indisputably the expression and result of exact laws. Unquestionably, too, it may be asserted that the existence and confession of the strange experiences and events which may be gathered under the head of coincidences "pertain to the human species, considered as a whole," for it would be difficult to find

the age or country where, in some form or other, Coincidence has not been observed and confessed. It may, therefore, be stated that Coincidence "belongs to the order of physical facts." It must, then, be obedient to law. We have come to the conclusion that even that most uncertain and insecure of physical facts, the weather, is governed by law. Our weather reports and prognostications are not very hopeful as yet, but that would appear to arise, not so much from the magnitude of the elements and conditions to be observed, as from their complex and involved character and our own entanglement (so to speak) with their manifestation. It is a case of not being able to see the wood for the trees. We need a coign of vantage from which to survey the whole question.

It is much the same with Coincidence. To discover its laws would seem to be even more delicate and difficult a work than to formulate the laws which govern the weather. But the first step must certainly be to acknowledge that such laws exist. We have taken that step with regard to the weather. The rainfall, the clouds, the winds, the isotherms of the year, the atmospheric depressions, cyclonic and anticyclonic conditions, are all being studied and reduced to a perceptible system. But we stop at the physical world, as we so often do, and are minded to consider that the laws which have led us so universally and unfail-

ingly on our way thus far suddenly break off here, and leave us in a supernatural, super-rational, lawless sort of region where law does not exist. We resign the ethical region of coincidence either to the hazy, illogical, reverently-blasphemous notion of some capricious and accidental Divine governance, or to the empty anarchy of chance. But it would seem that the truer view were to regard it as belonging to a higher "order of physical facts." It will lose nothing of mystery or of difficulty in this association; it may rather be found to gain in both, and at the same time to show the grave error that has been made by the over-credulous in imputing to coincidences an unreasonable meaning, and the still graver error of the over-sceptical in denying that they possess any meaning at all.

When we take some of the instances of Coincidence, we perceive signs that surely tell in favour of the presence of law. We may quote the following examples: The recurrence of similar events in the world at stated intervals:<sup>1</sup> the way in which an idea is seized or an influence felt simultaneously by people unassociated with one another: the waves of thought and feeling which will pass through the world, finding expression in varied forms, but taking the same direction: the cluster of answering

<sup>1</sup> "It is a rule that the most casual and extraordinary events, if the basis of population is broad enough, become matter of fixed calculation."—EMERSON.

ing thoughts and occurrences that will gather round a given centre of interest: the chain of events of like kind that will form itself without apparent cause or concert: the strange and sometimes inexplicable good or ill fortune that will follow a man through life, or a community through its career.

It is not necessary to enter on the lengthy task of exemplifying these instances. The greater number of them are matters of personal experience with us all, and a consideration of the public events of a century will testify to the possible existence of the larger areas of Coincidence.

Now in all these examples of Coincidence we perceive what may be taken as evidence of the presence of three great laws—Attraction, Repulsion, and Affinity. These laws are amongst the greatest governing forces we know in matter. And why should they be limited to matter? And even if they are, who can absolutely affirm where the realm of matter ends? It is the old ever-recurring question—are we not misled by our notions of what matter is? We are apt to think of it as something gross, tangible, palpable; something to be cognised by the senses of touch and sight. We do not sufficiently realise even the more ethereal forms of matter of which Science herself tells us—nay, of which we ourselves have daily experience,—as in scent, in the air, and in many material forms which escape detection by our ordinary senses. The light from one

of Crookes' vacuum tubes, by which photography seems initiating a new era for medical science, is almost too rare for ocular perception. It seems to be to light what the ether is to air. The light of a comet is matter in such a high state of tenuity that, bright as it is, it is scarcely more materialised than the ether itself, for the most distant stars have been discerned through the streaming tail of such a body with no perceptible diminution of their lustre or their size. We can, then, trace matter back to the unseen long before it passes on to the realm of the unknown. It may well be, therefore, that laws which attend matter all the way on this journey to the point where it passes from the ken of the scientific student, may pass with it over that mysterious limit, and rule it in the unknown as we confess they rule it in the known.

And in naming comets we bring into the subject mysterious visitors to our system in whom we may find an analogy for the mysterious visitations of Coincidence. For as comets visit our solar system in cycles, the parabolas of which are determined so accurately that the return of these brilliant meteoric Free Lances of the universe can be prophesied almost to an hour, so there may be visitors of still more etherialised character,—of matter so fine as to pass beyond the sphere that we call material and enter that we call spiritual or psychic, which also may have their periodicity, in cycles of advance and

retirement, exercising influences and causing perturbations, as they pass, on the thought-life of earth and even on the sphere of human action. It seems unreasonable to allow that Nature is one vast and complex system, a cosmos of rigorous and irrefrangible law, not an atom being left free or uninfluenced, and yet to argue or take it for granted that life—the world of thought and circumstance, and all that is covered by the term “human life”—presents to us no such system or cosmic order. Still less reasonable would it seem to be to argue (as it is to be feared many do) that an enquiry into these questions is beyond our right or power.

A few centuries ago the world at large in Christendom considered it impious to study the physical universe, and found black heresy in the assertions that our earth is a globe and moves round the sun. We have long passed that dismal stage of superstition miscalled the Age of Faith, but it is to be questioned whether many people to-day would not find some danger in scanning questioningly the phenomena of that world which is called Mind and Spirit. To hint that the same laws probably rule, and the same substantiality under different expressions probably forms, both the “Natural” and the “Supernatural” worlds, seems to involve in certain minds either a degradation of spiritual things or a perilous mystification of the material creation. To all such, no doubt, these matters are best left to the safe con-

fusion of the orthodoxy that has pigeon-holed the universe, and keeps life "ticketed, sorted, and numbered." But to any one who loves above all things the idea of unity, any advancing probability of parallel, and even of coincident lines in all the worlds that go to make up our life, is always a thought that leads toward hope and beauty. It is certain that the known and established laws, Attraction, Repulsion, and Affinity, in physical science offer points of analogy that go far to explain the strange element in life we call Coincidence.

Let us find other analogies for Coincidence from the world of Physics. Speaking of "elective affinities," Oliver Wendell Holmes says: "What tremendous forces they are if two subjects of them come within range! There lies a bit of iron. All the dynamic agencies of the universe are pledged to hold it in just that position, and there it will lie until it becomes a heap of red-brown rust. But see! I hold a magnet to it—and lo! it leaves them all—the tugging of the mighty earth, of the ghostly moon that walks in white, trailing the snaky waves of the ocean after her; of the awful sun, twice as large, as a sphere, that the whole orbit of the moon would but just girdle,—it leaves the wrestling of all these forces which are at a deadlock with each other, all fighting for it, and springs straight to the magnet."<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the unaccountable rush of thought, and

<sup>1</sup> "The Poet at the Breakfast Table."

even of action, that sometimes occurs in the world toward some idea, we might, surely without unreason, see the working of some magnet-like thought.

And thus, too, the law of polarity, by which a magnet will evolve order and form out of "a confused mass of inert matter,"<sup>1</sup> may well have a parallel law in life. Does it seem as if the simile were too far-fetched, and that to see any analogy between a bit of iron and human thought and action is too wide a leap? The leap is certainly wide enough. But let us recollect that, after all, the bit of iron approximates the ethereal conditions far more nearly than most people suppose. It seems solid and compact,—material to the last degree. But it is not. It is neither solid nor compact. It is but a coherent mass of infinitely minute atoms, held together by a mysterious force. But the atoms are each separate and separated, each having, so to speak, its own enveloping atmosphere. The ether penetrates every part. A sight is conceivable which would see right through it, and yet in no sense be supernatural. It is not solid in reality. The atoms are held together by an infinitely rapid and

<sup>1</sup> "Scatter a heap of iron filings on a plate of glass; bring near it a magnet and tap the glass gently, and you will see the filings arrange themselves in regular forms. . . . In other words, the chaos of a confused mass of inert matter has become a cosmos of harmonious arrangement, assuming definite form in obedience to law."—LAING, *A Modern Zoroastrian*.

fine movement. The movement can be quickened until the particles disintegrate and fly asunder and the solid becomes a liquid, and that—in turn—can be raised into a vapour and disappear in a puff of steam. But the atoms remain unchanged, and the puff of vapour is, in essence, the same thing exactly as the bit of iron. We may soon have a light that will pass through iron. It is only a question of degree between the iron and the puff of vapour. Even the final invisible atoms may not be Matter at all. It seems a question whether they are not Force, and if Force, then Movement; and thus even in the bit of rusty iron we approximate the idea of life very closely, if we only look deep enough. And who can say that if we could look, in inverse ratio, as deeply into human thought and action, we should not find an answering process, approximating matter at last quite as closely as the iron approximates life? Both are manifestations of one force—movement. Let us have the courage of our convictions, and, running before science a little way (in the wise fashion of children?), own that “matter” and “spirit” are one and the same, in different degrees and under many expressions, obeying one law. And so we will not quarrel with the analogy of the magnet with certain examples of Coincidence.

Analogy is not proof, certainly, and doubtless in all regions of thought strange correspondences may be traced to natural laws. But we have always

allowed that thought is a rational and ordered world in itself. The plea for pointing such analogies, then, and claiming whatever argument lies in them for Coincidence, is that the world has not as yet credited it with any such attributes of order. But surely it is significant that the phenomena of Coincidence certainly answer to the working of many confessed laws. Why should, for instance, the energy known as chemical affinity have no expression in this matter? The coincidental events and discoveries,—the thoughts which are hit on, and even sometimes expressed in almost the same way, seem strangely like a congeries round some unseen point or centre of attraction.

Or, again, if waves of force pass through earth and rock, as we know they do in seismic disturbance; if the ethereal undulations, and even certain forms of light (as now is also proved), pass through our bodies and substances which we call solid; and if (as now is also believed) the electric force can be transmitted with certain direction and intelligent application of use without the clumsy apparatus and medium of wires—it may well be that psychic and mental force can be, and is, transmitted and exercised in a hundred unknown and mysterious, but absolutely natural, ways in the unrecognised ether of thought.

## II

“Coincidence” is a very useful word. It covers a multitude of sins, which, in spite of all satire, anger, and argument, the more hidden and less understood forces of Nature are continually and most tiresomely committing against the conventional sanities and rule-of-thumb measurements of the orthodox man of science and of common sense. The tales and experiences which the Society of Psychical Research investigates are all labelled *Coincidences* by a large number of otherwise clever and liberal-minded people. They appear to consider the matters thus labelled are finally and satisfactorily settled. They find an enviable and almost occult satisfaction in this label. It is unnecessary to touch on this vexed question save to note in passing that *Coincidence* is the favourite term for everything in heaven and earth which Science confessedly does not understand. It is thus built up into something almost more extraordinary and inexplicable than the experiences and theories it is supposed to simplify.

But there is an agreeable humour in the suspicion that the good folks who so triumphantly say to those who are mystic-minded, “Nonsense! your wonderful and mysterious events and circumstances, thoughts and feelings, are nothing but coincidences! mere coincidences!” are, as a matter

of fact, announcing a great truth on lines they never meant to occupy. It is possible that the word may be found to hold a truer and fuller explanation of such matters than is at first discerned or intended. For, taking the scientific meaning of the word, it may be held to credit a circumstance which wears a mysterious, and even supernatural aspect, with the evolution of perfectly natural laws in the higher and less-known planes of Nature, answering to those laws of optics, physics, and logic with which we otherwise associate the word. Thus looked at, it may indeed strike the keynote in a matter that has appeared to have many dis cords, or at best to give out a very complex and uncertain sound. If the laws of Coincidence be ever confessed and tabulated, they will probably be discovered to be as purely and simply natural as any other laws of Nature; but they will often work on lines and touch things which have been hitherto miscalled supernatural. Trench points out that "men are continually uttering deeper things than they know, asserting mighty principles, it may be asserting them against themselves, in words that to them may seem nothing more than the current coin of society." Perhaps the man of hard-headed convictions and robust prejudices, who sweeps aside, as he thinks, an occurrence or experience of mysterious and supernatural aspect and import as "a mere coincidence," is in reality,

as I have said, enunciating a mysterious and supernatural truth which would amaze no one more than himself.

Mr. Richard Proctor, in his delightful volume, "The Borderland of Science," has an amusing, if not very convincing, article on "Coincidence and Superstitions." But he relegates the whole matter, broadly speaking, to the No-Man's Land of conventional popular superstition. Once, indeed, he seems minded to look seriously into the matter. "When we have undoubted cases of coincidence," he says, "without the possibility of any real association (setting the supernatural aside), we have a problem of some interest to deal with." There is, however, no attempt made to do so. He gives no hint at a solution save that of "miraculous intervention," and this he naturally and wisely rejects at once. He is "content with indicating the general interpretation of coincidences which appear very remarkable, but which nevertheless cannot be reasonably referred to special interpositions of Providence." He is occupied solely and entirely with considering the two positions which are usually drawn up as the base of the question: 1st, That coincidences are the results of mere chance or casualty, and are therefore in no way worthy of the notice they often receive. 2nd, That they are due to "supernatural intervention," "miraculous intervention," and are the result of some overruling Providence acting

rather in defiance of natural laws than by virtue of them. Having to choose one of these uncomfortable and uneasy horns of dilemma as his resting-place in this matter, he unhesitatingly, and reasonably enough, chooses the first. A large number of people, and, one may broadly say, the whole scientific world, make the same choice.

We will trust that greater satisfaction is found in the position than the picture conjured up would suggest. The idea, or suspicion of the idea, that the truth probably lies between these two equally unsatisfactory seats, and that Coincidence may be under laws as true and cosmic as those which govern astronomy, never seems to have presented itself in faintest outline to Mr. Proctor's imagination. It is thus that the great scientific thinkers so often fail—as it seems to us who look on, and love these Borderlands of science—so often fail, and adopt a line of thought that appears to us strangely unscientific. They refuse to carry on their own thought and methods beyond a certain arbitrary line which they themselves draw. Everything beyond is labelled "Spiritual," or "Supernatural," or "Unknowable," or some such term. Everything on *this* side the line is called "Material." The result, in many minds, is a sad and painful confusion, giving us gross Materialism on the one side, and an equally gross Supernaturalism on the other. Both sides are in fact and essence superstitious,

and therein lies the centre of the confusion. It has been truly said, "There is this similarity between the scientific superstition and the theological superstition, that they both believe that they have explained all, and they thereby place themselves beyond the possibility of being right."<sup>1</sup>

The suggestion that both sides of the arbitrary line I have mentioned are in essence the same under different expressions, and that there is no hard line anywhere at all, and that the same laws govern all, seems to be a scientific heresy of a kind that demands a scientific anathema with bell, book, and candle. In fact, I fear that the anathema might come also from other quarters. Mr. Proctor, however, points to the danger of confusing probability with proof, and this of course is the danger the advocates of the "supernatural" side are always falling into. "There arises in certain cases," he says, "the question whether coincidences may not appear so surprising as to justify the assumption that they are due to a real though undiscerned association between the coinciding events. This, of course, is the very basis of the scientific method; and it is well to notice how far this method may sometimes be unsafe. If remarkable coincidences can occur where there is no real connection—as we have seen to be the case—caution must be required in recognising coincidence as demonstrative

<sup>1</sup> "Regeneration: An Answer to Max Nordau."

of association." This is, we must all agree, most clear and admirable, and it points out a weakness that many of the believers in the supernatural exhibit too often. But it appears, by what fore-runs and follows this passage, that the danger he sees and naturally wishes to guard against in tracing "coincidence as demonstrative of association," is that of being forced thereby into accepting the old conventional position of that sadly unscientific "supernatural agency." One cannot think he would have been so unwilling to perceive in coincidence something more than blind and empty chance had he for a moment apprehended the possible thesis of known and natural laws working in its "mysterious" and "supernatural" phenomena.

Emerson, in his essay on "Power," says: "The mind that is parallel with the laws of Nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength. One man is made of the same stuff of which events are made ; is in sympathy with the course of things." Much that would be called coincidence in the life of such a man would in reality, by this reasoning, be the inevitable result of law and of the elements employed in the material of the man. He is in correspondence with the order and growth of life. The reverse condition may be equally true. "The good stars" may not have "met in his horoscope," and there may be an actual force of repulsion at work. The elements of success, of well-being, may

be driven away from him by a repulsion as natural as any that is discernible in the physical world, or an affinity with what is weak and disintegrating may draw misfortune to him as he passes on his way.

Such cases have come under one's personal experience. The ideas of fate or destiny doubtless grew from such instances. The world has always recognised that such ideas express a great truth. The Greek tragedies embody them with majestic utterance. They have been the cause both of strength and weakness in men; but on the whole, like all truths, however partial and one-sided, they have wrought more of good than of ill in the world. Some of the strongest and grandest nations of history have been deeply imbued with the idea of fate and destiny. In religion it has oftentimes played a foremost part. It accompanies the development of some of the grandest of the biblical characters. The belief in fate of any kind no longer holds the place in the world it once occupied; though we still see men of strong nature who have a decided bent toward fatalism. But the influence of our emancipated religious thought on the one hand, and of the questioning and sceptical spirit that has characterised modern thought and science on the other, alike work against the conception of an overshadowing or illuminating destiny. It is antagonistic to the spirit of the

age. We more than echo the phrase of him who said that the destiny the gods make for us we may indeed hope to escape, but from the destiny we make for ourselves there is no escape. We carry the thought on to the point that doubts if there is any destiny at all save that which is self-made. And yet, even so, we do but shift the dispensation of the burden of fate from "the gods" to our own hands. The sense of the burden and mystery remains. "Wise men feel that there is something which cannot be talked or voted away—a strap or belt which girds the world."<sup>1</sup>

And after all, it would seem this feeling, this sense of Fate, of Fortune, of strange coincidence which rules the lives of some people, even some communities, is a rational and true one, based on a life reality and the perception of many ages. Call it what we may, and place its origin where we will, it exists. And by facing it with the thought in our minds that it is the expression of natural laws acting in the spiritual world (to quote Professor Drummond's words), it frees itself from the gloom of a superstitious notion of an irrational Fate, and its workings at once seem thrown open to light and hope, and even to possible final understanding.

The ideas of fate and destiny which the classic age centred in the gods, at later times found expression in the astrologer's horoscope. The planets

<sup>1</sup> Emerson.

and stars were the rulers of men's lives and fortunes. The world in general smiles at such ideas nowadays—smiles perhaps with too assured a superiority. For after all, the idea of planetary and stellar influence is in essence a scientific one. Possibly the expression was often phantastic and even foolish. But we must recollect that the theory of attraction and of definite forces exercised by all the members of the solar system on one another, nay, by the galaxies of suns that throng the sidereal universe, is accepted and proved. Is there, then, anything unreasonable or unscientific in the corollary that there is also a psychic force at work from the same bodies—bodies we may, surely with justice, imagine are the centres of life and intelligence and spirit? If our insignificant world is the scene of such a mighty drama as is unrolled to our eyes in the history of Man, even as far as we know it, who can suppose that for every glittering point which gems the starlit sky there is not an answering centre of Life—of Life perhaps as far more glorious than ours as those glorious orbs exceed in splendour and majesty our tiny planet? “The mutual dependence all things have, and the relation they stand in to each other,” was noted by the imperial philosopher of Rome; “for all parts of Nature,” he writes, “are in some measure united together and interwoven, and for this reason have a natural sympathy for each other.”

The most occult and necromantic horoscope that was ever drawn up to order by paid and fraudulent astrologer seems more scientific in its root-idea than the happy-go-lucky scheme of Chance—the notion of isolated, disconnected, answerable-to-no-one and responsive-to-nothing scheme of Life which too often obtains in these latter days. To credit Nature with too much meaning is not an ignoble thing; it might be questioned if it were a possible one. The mystic has always believed—to put it in homely and colloquial phrase—that nothing can mean nothing. But many people nowadays seem to like to believe that the greater number of things are innocent of meaning. Astrology only credited Nature with a corresponding unseen force for every part of her manifestation. And after all, modern science works on somewhat similar lines. Mr. Proctor, who is no friend to anything savouring of the occult, owns that astrology is based on a truth. "The heavenly bodies," he says in his "Borderland of Science," *do* rule the fates of men and nations in the most unmistakable way, seeing that without the controlling and beneficent influence of the chief among those orbs—the sun—every living creature on the earth must perish."

If the sun, the moon, and the planets hold our earth in its orbit, give and control its many motions, and have been, and are, and ever will be, the principal moulders of its form and arbiters of its character,

why should we reject the idea that their influence is not merely material, but that they exert also an influence on the human life of the planet? It seems a curious and dismembered argument which allows that physical forces of all kind issue and radiate from our earth in all directions through space, but that the greatest force the earth knows—the will and spirit of Man—the force, in fact, to which the whole creation and evolution of earth appears to have led, has no issue and no radiation. If such a force be existent and operative, it must journey out into space, and affect other planets, even as the physical forces sent off from us affect them.

And if this be granted as a possibility, the door opens which admits the answering possibility that the other planets send out psychic force to us. Our earth, then, might be touched by these unseen forces which are travelling to it from other worlds, just as the material forces are—possibly from regions of space and infinity beyond the range of farthest sight. For we notice that such conceivable undulations of on-travelling force would be inexhaustible, and, further, would never neutralise one another; for even like the more materialised forces that issue from the great centres of force, these circling waves would never interfere one with another. “Every sun in space is the centre of constant undulations, which thus *perpetually cross each other through immensity, without ever being con-*

*fused or mutually mingled.*"<sup>1</sup> This marvellous and endlessly suggestive fact may be read in the ripples of water, which will cross and recross each other without being destroyed. How much more readily, then, could those psychic undulations, if they exist, cross one another through immensity. The distances of space may seem almost unthinkable to us, but they scarcely exist for Attraction. Light travels quickly—at the rate of 186,660 miles per second. But light is a slow traveller when compared with Attraction and other great forces in Nature.

The forces that have been called supernatural may flash through space with a speed to which Attraction itself is a laggard. Space, we are told, is not to be thought of as the "aching void" of old; not as a gulf which separates the worlds, but as a means of communication between them. Our physical world and atmosphere are filled and penetrated through all their compacted yet separated molecules with forces which have voyaged from the sun and those distant suns, the stars. Our thought-atmosphere and the world of human life may be, *à fortiori*, filled and penetrated with mental and spiritual influences. The strange coincidences of our lives and of history may thus be proved some day to be but the natural and inevitable results of laws as natural and inevitable as those which govern

<sup>1</sup> Flammarion, "Popular Astronomy."

our atmosphere and hold our globe in its place in the universe. Fate and destiny may be found, after all, to be realities, although the names show but a partial perception of the truth. They are coincidences of great and unknown forces.

That each generation presents a typical attitude of mind as well as a certain marked type of face is a fact that may be explained to some extent by more obvious and material arguments than the subtleties of Coincidence. Yet physiology can scarcely account for all the distinguishing traits of a generation. The similarity of feature and general contour of face, which we cannot fail to observe in the men and women of our own time, as well as in those of past generations, whose "counterfeit presentments" have been preserved for us on canvas and in stone, may in part be explained by what Oliver Wendell Holmes calls "a certain involuntary adjustment." "Every former thing we look upon," he says, "puts its special mark on us. If this be repeated often enough, we get a permanent resemblance to it, or at least a fixed aspect which we took from it." But apart from, and beyond all such characteristics as may be thus accounted for, there are signs of a dominance of "the spirit of the age," which cannot be explained in any such way. It is, for example, no exceptional thing to find a boy or girl who is eminently a child of the age, but whose parents

and family are what is called “thoroughly old-fashioned” folk, untouched by the life and thought of their day, ignorant perhaps of its tendencies, and far removed from its influence. Yet the child is, by instinct, by intuitive choice, and self-formation, in touch with all current feeling and aspiration—even (in some cases) with the outward fashions and modes of living. Such cases have come under one’s personal observation. This in-born sympathy with the spirit of the day may be labelled a coincidence, but it is a coincidence so common that it presents good reason for presupposing an underlying law. It must surely be the response and expression of some force not to be explained on material grounds entirely, or left to the witless vacuity of chance. It may be the fulfilment of the Idea which was dimly apprehended by the philosopher poet when he wrote—

“ For the prevision is allied  
Unto the thing so signified ;  
Or say the forethought which awaits  
Is the same genius that creates.”<sup>1</sup>

The perception of some such law has often been expressed by men of insight and poetic vision. Kingsley carries it far when he says, “The same law creates both the giver and the receiver, the longing and its home.” Certainly it would seem that there is oftentimes a spirit of the age which

<sup>1</sup> Emerson.

prepares and produces human instruments subtly allied to its previsions and adapted to fulfil its prophecies.

But of all the considerations which present themselves to our mind in connecting coincidence with the idea of law, the strongest suggestion, after all, lies in the fact of periodicity, which is confessedly a feature in so many forms of coincidence. Herein we see a sign that is always welcome, and hear a note that gives accord with the universe, for it suggests Movement. In "movement, sovereign and supreme," lies the root of all phenomena. It gives us the beauty and music and life and warmth of the world—gives us life itself, and is perceptible in our highest emotions and thoughts.

In periodicity we further find the idea of movement possessing discernible, or at least apprehended, order and rhythm. The very word *coincidence* involves the notion of movement: and with periodicity added, cadence, consonance, and harmony itself seem faintly outlined in its unexplored depths. We perceive that it is a word of exact meaning, not to be shuffled discreditably away, or emptied, with a laugh, of its just and proper meaning. It can by no means be lightly pronounced to be a mere synonym for Chance. "Chance is a word void of sense," wrote Voltaire. Let us emancipate Coincidence from association with so senseless a word. And in doing so, let us own that the things designated thus

—the coincidences of life—are manifestations, often mysterious, baffling to all present search, and working by means and in ways not yet understood, of a movement in the unseen world in correspondence with the force of movement which seems to underlie all life; manifestations freed on the one hand from the childishness of superstitious credulity, and on the other from the would-be-worldly wisdom of equally superstitious scepticism.



A R R E S T   O R   A D V A N C E ?

“As for us, we are called to a higher life, we ascend to a nobler standpoint, and brace ourselves in a manlier school. We are bidden to strive for a life like that of the life of the spiritual and bodiless powers.”—ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

“Before the immense possibilities of man, all mere experience, all past biography, however spotless and sainted, shrinks away.”—EMERSON.

“Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt the place, give me beauty in the inward soul, and may the outward and the inward man be at one.”—SOCRATES, *in the “Phaedrus” of Plato.*

“Dissatisfaction is a necessary condition of progress.”—EDWARD CLODD.

“For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form, and doth the body make.”

—SPENSER.

## IV

### ARREST OR ADVANCE?

#### I

EVEN the most casual reader of current science must be familiar with the expression, "the Arrest of the Body," and the thoughts it presents. The profound investigations and accurate knowledge that have led to the idea thus specified are well authenticated and established. Anatomy and physiology, speaking with certain voice in this matter, assure us that Man has reached his highest physical development, and earth has therein probably attained her highest material expression. To the many of us who have no technical knowledge of anatomy and biology, it is a welcome possibility that a statement of the results of research and experiment in these fields of science may nowadays be gained through the works of men, who give us, in more or less popular form, the gathered wisdom of their schools. Such a work is the "Ascent of Man," by Professor Drummond, a chapter of which is devoted to the subject of the Arrest of the Body.

Therein may be found the weighty reasons that have led to the conclusion formulated in this expression. He tells us, in his lucid style, the steps by which science has come to the conviction that it is probable that "the goal looked forward to from the beginning of time has been attained," and that "Nature, in making a Man, can go no further: organic evolution has done its work." He points out that this idea is "no conceit of science, nor a reminiscence of the pre-Copernican idea that the centre of the universe is the world, and the centre of the world Man;" but that it is, on the contrary, "the sober scientific probability." He goes on briefly to explain the answerable reasons for this premise, reasons approximating proof so closely, that they leave—from the scientific point of view—no foothold for reasonable doubt.

We may, then, fairly take it for granted that this theory of the arrest of the body is an accepted one. The scientific world of to-day stands up and owns that Man, as animal, is perfected; that, in the words of Fiske, "On earth there will never be a higher creature than Man."

Yet, when we turn our eyes to other fields of thought, and of science itself, we find a possibility, almost a prophecy, of higher things for Man than he has yet reached. We hear on many sides a demand, an urgent aspiration, for wider horizons, further developments, ampler powers, fresh avenues of life

and energy, more spiritual conditions. There is a widespread hope amongst men that they may count

“That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do.”

And although those words must be held to refer to Man’s achievements more than to his embodiments, they have their meaning also when taken with regard to his own evolution—to his becoming as resultant from his doing; since in the long periods of human development it is impossible to entirely separate the two things. As Emerson says, “Nature is not fixed, but fluid and spirit; spirit alters, moulds, makes it. . . . There are no fixtures in Nature.” What we do is prophetic of what we shall be: and perhaps thought—rooted living thought—is a more potent creative force even than deeds. “Properly it is the course of his unseen life,” says Carlyle, “which informs and rules his external visible life, rather than receives rule from it.” Poets, whose intuition and power of vision are great, have sung to us of the possibilities in Man which have not been yet realised. Browning, if utterances he places in the mouths of his personages are in any way his own, seems to think that growth need not cease for Man because earth has done its work.

“I say that man was made to grow, not stop;  
That help he needed once, and needs no more,  
Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:  
For he hath new deeds, and new helps to these.

This imports solely man should mount on each  
 New height in view : the help whereby he mounts,  
 The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,  
 Since all things suffer change save God the truth.  
 Man apprehends Him newly at each stage  
 Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done."

The prophetic poet of the West, Walt Whitman, sings pæans of welcome to the Man whom his faith discerns in the future. In the "Song of Myself" he sings:—

"There is no stoppage, and never can be stoppage,  
 If I, you, and the world, and all beneath or upon its surface,  
 were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it  
 would not avail in the long-run :  
 We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
 And surely go as much farther, and then farther and  
 farther."

And again, in his "Mystic Trumpeter":—

"O glad, exulting, culminating song !  
 A vigour more than earth's is in thy notes,  
 Marches of victory—man disenthralled—the conqueror at  
 last,  
 Hymns to the universal God from universal man—all joy !  
 A re-born race appears—a perfect world—all joy !  
 Women and men in wisdom, innocence, and health—all joy !  
 . . . . .  
 War, sorrows, suffering gone—the rank earth purged—  
 nothing but joy left !  
 . . . . .  
 Joy ! joy ! in freedom, worship, love ! joy in the ecstasy  
 of life !"

Nor is it alone in the rhapsodies of poetry that the possibility of life opening into new channels is pre-

sented to our thought. Modern philosophy gives an answering word. In Mr. Bradley's work, "Appearance and Reality," we find this passage : "A future life is possible, even on the grounds of common crude materialism. After an interval, no matter how long, another nervous system sufficiently like our own might be developed ; and in this case memory and a personal identity must arise. The event may be as improbable as you please, but I, at least, can find no reason for calling it impossible. And we may even go a step farther still. It is conceivable that an indefinite number of such bodies should exist, not in succession, but altogether and at once. But if so, we might gain a personal continuance, not single but multiform, and might secure a destiny on which it would be idle to enlarge." And in a note he adds : "It may, perhaps, be worth while to add here that apparently even a higher organism is possible, which, apart from accidents, would never die. Apparently this could not be termed impossible in principle, at least within our present knowledge." The philosopher herein really seems more daring in speculation than the poet, and opens out even more startling possibilities to Man.

A larger number of teachers than any one not interested in the matter would credit are to-day spreading the gospel in the world that Nature denies nothing to earnest true demand, and that Thought is the life, the health, and the moulder

of the body. Enthusiasm carries many of these teachers to the point of taking the apostolic words literally, that the last enemy to be overcome is death. And any one who has carefully, and without the antagonism that in all such matters closes the very door that is to be opened, followed the line of thought that leads to this very surprising belief and hope, must confess that it has a direct and logical sequence. The works of that remarkable writer, Prentice Mulford (of whom the grave and reasonable Whittier wrote a memorial verse of almost measureless praise), give, in brief and popular form, a wonderfully practical outline to a creed that else might seem to many to belong to a world of dreams and impracticable ideas. He spoke to busy men and women, and met them on their own lines. But those who care to see his purpose will find the words capable of great expansion and high application. Seldom, one is minded to think, in the history of the world has there been a greater sense of expectancy than is in the air around us to-day. It is natural it should be so. The cycle of periodicity appears to be complete. The time seems to point to an advance, and a questioning outlook toward what may be coming is discernible amongst all people. It may indeed be that the learned ones of the earth despise these fermentations and dreams of the popular mind, even if they know that such fermentations and dreams assert themselves. The

schools, and academies, and temples of thought and science, are sometimes the last places that are reached and penetrated by the great flood-tides of the world. All such majestic structures lie high, and the dryness that is attendant on height is not always an advantage.

But there are signs that Science itself (at least when represented by men who hold that it is something better than "a trained and organised common-sense," and who strive not only to see signs, but "also the things signified") is not untouched by the general flow and feeling of expectation.<sup>1</sup> The borderland of science which lies between the physical and the psychical is no longer given up to the dreamer and the charlatan. With the acceptance of the "stupendous crisis in Nature"—as Professor Drummond calls it—which is signified in the phrase,

<sup>1</sup> In "The Present Evolution of Man," Mr. G. Archibald Reed, whilst noting that most of the old factors of evolution in the struggle for existence are no longer potent enough to work a survival of the fittest, observes that there are still "potent and effective physical agents at work." These agents, he declares, are capable of effecting still further evolution for man. Chief amongst these agents he ranks "zymotic disease." He argues even further. He suggests that certain "moral" resistances and factors may also be at work and develop man on a higher road. Thus he takes alcohol and opium. His arguments for this "moral" evolution—producing in time a race "immune" to certain temptations now potent for destruction—are very striking and suggestive, and open out an avenue of thought it is impossible not to accept with hope. It seems to point to the "good in things evil," and to be a sign that even science is beginning to wonder if the arrest of the body is final after all.

the Arrest of the Body, a second thought seems to be coming luminously into sight, which gives the body a word of advance such as the world at large has never before realised. It is that man is "a great deal more than the physiologist has told him;"<sup>1</sup>—that for the Generation and Arrest of the body there is a corresponding Regeneration and Advance.

It will be urged that this is no new doctrine. Nor is it. The Church would claim that it was enunciated eighteen hundred years ago. Many believe it was but reasserted then, and is as old as the world. Religion, it would seem, has always taught the truth in some form, and claims examples to prove that it has been accepted and realised. But the form in which it is now more and more proclaimed in the world is new to this era, in that it comes not exclusively as a "religious" and "spiritual" truth, but as a truth for the entire man. That a regeneration of a "spiritual" kind is possible for man, nay, is his great secret and mission in this life, has been, of course, the great message of religion through the centuries of our era. But with the inclination the world has nowadays to isolate each subject and department of thought, and keep it labelled and separate from all the others, we are apt to limit the idea of regeneration (if we accept it) to some spiritual and

<sup>1</sup> Edward Berdoe.

theological abstraction that has little or nothing to do with daily life and environment, or with the "fleshly tabernacle" the spiritual essence inhabits, save in giving a sanction and sanctification of piety to them all.

But surely there is something more than this in the great idea. Is not regeneration to include the whole entity and nature of Man in his fourfold state of body, mind, soul, and spirit? Such a thought at least seems clearly if mystically written on the pages of our Scripture, though it may be but little realised by the world at large. If the body be capable of the consecration the words of Scripture imply, it would seem but a natural, nay, an inevitable result that the Divine creative spirit should bring illumination and transmutation with its presence. Religion in its highest form has always, in a certain degree and under given conditions, claimed this power. Doubtless it will always claim it, and be able to point to its exponents. But they are rare, and it can scarcely be denied that the doctrine of regeneration has, as a rule, in its practical instances, ignored or contemned the body, and been a matter of spiritual meaning alone. This is especially noticeable in the East to this day, and in the history of the saints of the early Christian Church. In the ancient Egyptian faith it would appear that the body was supposed in some way to share in the regeneration of the indwelling spirit.

In the "Book of Respirations" (a name which significantly dwells on the idea of Breath) we read in the "Dirge to the Dead"—

"Thou dost enter the horizon with the sun.  
Thou art justified ever and ever.  
Hail to the Osiris !  
Thine individuality is permanent.  
Thy body is durable. . . .  
Thy body is rejuvenated. . . .  
Thy flesh is on thy bones ;  
Like unto thy form on earth. . . .  
Thou art divinised with the souls of the gods.  
Thy heart is the heart of Ra. . . .  
Thou art prepared for life.  
Thou remainest in a healthful state ;  
Thou walkest, thou breathest everywhere."

This, it is evident, is a very much more definite idea than our Resurrection of the Body, as that doctrine at least is received by the laity. The Egyptian Hermes, the Thrice-Great, was held to have conquered the three states of body, soul, and spirit. Moses, deeply initiated in the mysteries of Egypt,<sup>1</sup> appears to have possessed the magic power

<sup>1</sup> Recent investigation and research in the hieroglyphic writings and papyrus rolls that have been elucidated and discovered, seem to prove that Moses was in reality an Egyptian of the royal house. The whole narrative points to this, if carefully examined. The Hebrews would naturally wish to claim him. The Egyptians would have no such wish ; yet they have recorded the fact. The symbolic figure of Moses, so constantly seen in Christian churches, is also a proof of his Egyptian origin. The horns were the symbol of the royal priesthood of Osiris : Moses, whose Egyptian name is said to be Hosarsiph, being one of the Pharaohs.

over the body, by the account given of him; and we notice that in his case, as well as that of Elijah and other great ones of old, it is implied that death was a transition and transmutation. The transfiguration was complete, as was subsequently typified. If we are not prepared to deny these examples—and the religious world could scarcely do so—it must be held that this wonderful power has passed from amongst us, or that it has in later ages been strangely hidden. It would be claimed by some people that the latter is the truer view of the matter. It seems pretty certain that the search of alchemy in its highest instances was a quest for this higher development of life. Whether it was a mistaken one, and whether it was not often perverted into dark and tortuous ways, is not the question. But those mysteries and much-derided expressions, the Elixir of Life, the Philosopher's Stone, the Transmutation of Metals, and many others, certainly meant in their ideals nothing less than the realisation of the stupendous ideal of a higher life for the whole entity and substance of Man, an immortality in the flesh, not by lengthening the mere mortal life, but by transmuting or transubstantiating its elements.

This ideal, however far removed it may be from the thoughts of to-day, however dangerous and repellent it may seem to some, can scarcely be pro-

nounced either ignoble, absurd, or in its deepest sense anything but essentially religious. "Know that the quintessence and hidden thing of our stone is nothing less than our celestial and glorious spirit, drawn by our magistry out of its mine," is the confession of Synesius. Of course these intrepid searchers after deep mysteries had the faults of their time. Mediaevalism had a spirit of its own, as every age has, and it is naturally very much at variance with the spirit of our own day. But a thought rules many ages under different expressions; and it seems difficult to deny that, however much a certain attitude of modern thought fights and derides any notion of a sacramental mystery in the life and body of man, and however much the Church in the long darkness of the Middle Ages denounced and persecuted those who believed in and sought for it, the mystery itself lives in the very centre of religious belief, and is written in undeniably characters on the writings we hold as sacred.

The idea of a higher evolution for the whole constitution of Man seems to have held a place in many forms of faith. That such a possibility is acknowledged in the great faiths of India is generally confessed, although the systems and means of development and reception are very partially known, and less understood. The general instinct of the Anglo-Saxon is strongly against such theories. A certain strong, wholesome animalism, and an equally

strong, and, in a sense, wholesome "common-sense," shuts off the Western world very much from the perception of such bright and dangerous truths. For the average and aggregate well-being of a strong nation this is, no doubt, a good thing. It has its reward. But the fact remains, that people who have honestly looked into the matter and seen the systems in work, even though they confessedly did not understand or greatly admire them or their results, own that there are strange and inexplicable experiences and facts to be met with in the mysterious fraternities of Hindostan which point to the existence of possible forces and resources in Man which are at the most only "dreamt of in *our* philosophy."

Any living and rooted thought will certainly work its will on the human organism, even when no such possibility is conjectured. We see that before us in the world every day. We notice it at work with those around us. There can be no question that the impress and complexion of a national thought, a national faith, moulds and colours the people of the nation. It may be that the great physical perfection to which the Greeks of old certainly appear to have attained was in a measure due to some compelling influence of this kind. Beauty and a high regard for the body had their place in the worship of the nation. Never has history seen humanity more deified, a theogony so humanised, or spiritual truth taught in such fair and seductive forms. The result

was expressed in the rare artistic power and perception of Greece, and in the extraordinary personal beauty that has become an ideal to all after-ages. The mystic wine of Dionysos fired alike the soul and the body. The Greeks and their Art are a lasting proof to the world that the worship of the Beautiful moulds its votaries to its own personification. That the worship deteriorated as the spirit was lost, and the form became materialised more and more, till it sank into gross idolatry of the form alone, is not a part of the question, which is simply that of the possibility of inward thought expressing itself outwardly in the body.

It would seem that for some centuries we have ignored or denied this theory, and we appear to have physically retrograded in consequence. The dogma which separated body from spirit and called it "vile" has done its work. Monasticism and Calvinism have distinctly hindered the perfecting of the body, or any realisation of the mysterious and majestic idea of the ancient world, and of the highest revelation accorded to Man. The doctrine of the body that was to be denied for the sake of the soul that was to be saved,—a doctrine that actuated the religious world from the time of St. Simon Stylites to that of Praise-God-Barebones,—was in its way a noble one,—as it was also a necessary one,—in its time and place; but the world is clearly and unequivocally passing beyond and away from it in our day.

We have rediscovered the fact that if we would be free from the body we must neither despise, neglect, nor misuse it, any more than we must pamper or worship it. It must have an Ascent. The old symbol of Solomon's seal was deep in its significations. The triangles must be interlocked and form one star.

Contempt for, and fear of, the body has so long and superstitiously been read into revelation, that it is with difficulty we can rid ourselves from the nightmare. But it is certain that the words which chiefly seem to justify the asceticism and manicheism of the Middle Ages, and of the Calvinistic idea of the body, can be equally well read from the point of view which includes the whole entity of man, regenerated and transmuted. This, however, is no real part of the subject, and it is scarcely on religious grounds that the idea is to be taken in connection with the thought of a possible Advance for Man. Such an idea is indeed religious in one sense—a true binding anew of what might else be lost; but it is when applied to man as Man, the denizen of earth, and not alone to him as a progressive soul journeying on toward "another and a better world," that the thought strikes a note in our ear that seems to introduce a new harmony in the planetary music,—a harmony that promises resolution into a higher and grander key than is heard in the theory of Man as arrested in his human evolution.

Arrest must surely imply doom. Nature cannot stand still. "There are no fixtures in Nature." It is true that there is that wonderful and incomplete puzzle which Professor Huxley first presented to naturalists in those climacteric forms of life known as Persistent Types. These types, we are told, have stood still and flourished in what appears to be an arrested state for countless ages. During these periods other types have evolved in a manner that, when foreshortened in the retrospect, appear so magical that they practically erase the word *impossible* from our vocabulary, especially when applied to the latent potentialities of Nature. It is true these Persistent Types have held their own through all these long ages, yet we cannot but remember that these immense vistas of time are in reality only a minute of infinity. We must rise in thought to the point whence time and place are but the illusions of planetary life. "Time has only a relative existence," Carlyle tells us, and in saying so he but repeats the thought of all science and all philosophy.

These Persistent Types may have had doom written on them in spite of what seems to us their unconquerable longevity. Our reason and intuition tell us that when Man himself, the highest of all earthly types, has arrived at his natural goal, and has accepted the sentence of material maturity, it must be a crisis of the most portentous kind in his history. Possibly this crisis has been the point

of time which we know as the history of man. Enormous as are the periods of time which the geologist claims for the indications he has discovered of the presence of Man on this planet, they are to the life of infinity but as this passing moment of time is to them. It may be Man has stood at the arrested stage for many ages. Such as he is now, he probably was in the earliest known times of Egypt and India. Perhaps he was the same creature he is now in those far-off ages of which the only relics are a few roughly-hewn stones and implements buried in the deeper strata of the earth. He may have been working out in this span of time, this moment of infinity, the question of physical advance or deterioration; —if evolution is to cease, or to be carried on upon new lines, and by the demands of a new environment.

The whole story of evolution shows us that the survival of the fittest and the struggle for life, and all the means we have been told are employed by Nature to perfect her types—whether born from an upward-striving instinct, or a selfish desire to keep in the ranks, and consequently escape the penalties of “falling out”—are all expressed in the creature’s adaptability to its environment. We are familiar with Mr. Herbert Spencer’s celebrated definition of life—“a continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.” That our

advance in the scale of creation—that health and well-being in life—that life itself—is dependent on a swift power of adapting ourselves to our environments; and that, when Nature refuses to do so, or loses such power, arrest of the species and death in the case of the creature, supervenes, is the accepted belief in these days. If, then, we take the scientific dictum as final, and believe that the arrest of the body is indisputably proved, it is clear that Man, if he is to advance, must find some new environment, other than that which science takes cognisance of in his physical evolution; or it must be proved that there are subtle but vastly important elements and factors in the environment now accepted which have been overlooked or ignored by science, and to which Man has not, as yet, fully adapted himself.

## II

Our first question naturally is, whether it be indeed satisfactorily proved that Man, in his natural evolution, has reached the stage of arrest? Has not some factor in the subtle constitution of the body escaped the eye of the physiologist and the biologist? Perhaps there is something in our structure which no anatomy will ever detect. To pass sentence on Man, or indeed on any living organism, simply as a physical creature, is surely

a dangerously elementary and unimaginative proceeding. In the reverent and noble, yet it may be limited and mistaken, accuracy of science—in its consideration of nothing but what it calls “facts”—has it not lost one-half, and the most important half, of the subject of “Man”? A large section of the scientific world, I suppose, would own at once that there is something in life more than matter. But matter alone is what science seems to feel itself competent to deal with or desirous to consider. All else is put aside and left to the metaphysician and the theologian. But in doing this, does not science ignore the very method it follows in other subjects? The analysis seems partial only. A prognosis that is founded on an imperfect diagnosis is not of final value. This possible deficiency in scientific methods is being more and more pointed out by writers of influence and the thoughtful part of the community. The question is even represented in the ranks of science itself.

It may be, indeed, too much to ask or expect science to go beyond her proper range and self-ordained domain of phenomena. In refusing to do so she may be entirely right, but is she entirely right when she ignores in her calculations and deductions the existence of anything beyond phenomena? In the ranks of her own studies she might read a parable. If the mathematician

were left to solve the problem of solar heat, he apparently could do so very satisfactorily. But the geologist steps in and proves his figures are wrong, though they are flawless, since they will not work in with other facts, proved and confessed. His unassisted explanation fails because it is too exclusively technical. It does not take cognisance of all the data. It seems to us who look on, that science altogether, in its analysis and explanation of Man, is very apt to act the part of mathematics in the question of solar heat; only, unlike the mathematicians, she is unwilling to accept the sentence passed on her by the other great factors in life, and confess that her resultant calculations, though perfect in themselves, are somehow only partial, since they present the obvious mistake and anomaly of leaving a large and most important part of the constitution of Man (the very part that makes Man great, and has been most considered and most appealed to by the greatest men) wholly unaccounted for. It is not surprising, therefore, that Man remains as mysterious a problem as solar heat, and presumably will prove the more difficult of solution.

The thesis of the Arrest of the Body seems to rest mainly on the fact that in his structure and constitution Man as an animal has adapted himself to his environment to the last possible point. The organic structure of his brain is developed until development can go no further without interfering

with the other organs. But all these proofs are based on the assumption of Man as the human animal, and nothing more; and the environment that is considered is purely that of the physical constitution, in which it appears to be taken for granted that Man is, always has been, and always will be content. But surely one of the distinguishing marks of Man in all his higher evolution is that, whilst the animal creation seems content with its environments, and but seeks to adapt its constitution and structure and functions to these environments, the human race, on the contrary, exhibits in its highest examples and races a grand discontent at its physical environments, and is for ever seeking to transcend them. Does it not seem almost as if Man, in this upward and outward striving after something higher and wider than animal life at its highest and best, is for ever compelled by some mysterious instinct to call for and receive loftier conditions and an ever-advancing environment, which demands in its turn an ever-responding adaptability? It surely may be taken as significant of this mysterious instinct that the human race, as it advances in civilisation, appears to feel an intuitive and unaccountable dissatisfaction—may one not almost say, shame?—in its conditions.

The perception that “every prospect pleases, and only man is vile,” to which few people, I suppose,

are in some form or other strangers, has small correspondence with the assurance which science gives us that Man as a creature is perfected. Ages ago Plato put the feeling into words for us, and the words ring true still. He says: "There is a certain grief in things as they are, in man as he has come to be, as he certainly is. Over and above those griefs of circumstance which are in a measure removable, some inexplicable shortcoming or misadventure on the part of Nature itself." The words are full of meaning. "In man as he has come to be," suggests strange thoughts which answer to that mystic "Fall" of which the Bible speaks. "Some inexplicable shortcoming" hints at a grander fate or recovery awaiting him. It all points to the thought that man is "a great deal more than the physiologist has told him." The trees, the flowers, the birds, the animals, all created things in their several degrees and kinds, appear beautiful to us. Save for "those griefs of circumstance which are in a measure removable," the creatures seem perfect in their adaptability to their environment. But at Man, despite the godlike beauty of his form, despite the "how excellent a piece of work" we perceive him to be, there comes a sense of something far below the realisation of his original idea or his final destiny. We seem to feel that the type has not yet realised the archetype. There is—let us confess it—an inexplicable dissatisfaction and shame. In

some natures of a noble type it takes the form almost of a quarrel with the actual conditions of life. In others, the conditions are happily submitted to, and made the best of.

But few, it would appear, accept the conditions other than on distinctly conditional terms, even when the terms are given with the calm of philosophy or the faith of religion. Yet there is surely a point of view from which the quarrel might vanish into a mysterious understanding and the submission rise into a glad acceptance, since it would be perceived that there is something in Man not discernible in the rest of creation, and that this subtle but wonderful element is his birthright to claim an environment that never closes, giving him for ever the word of an eternal advance.

If we accept the idea that man can make, and has to some extent always made, his own environment, we may fairly go on to consider if this power may not be increased by being consciously and experimentally exercised? It would be hard to say where we can place limits to the workings of that great law of the universe—Attraction. It seems pretty evident that Man in certain small matters (if there be any *great* or *small* in such considerations) is more and more creating his own environment; making it in a way that would have seemed impossible to our grandfathers. Distance—that heavy and cramping factor in our life—is wonderfully

lessened in its power in these days of railroad and steamship, telegraph and telephone. Our surroundings no longer shut us in as once they did. We have compelled them to open out in many directions. In some measure, with our resources of science and facilities of transport, we make and seek our own climate and temperature. Man has developed his brain, and to a certain extent gained the control of nature. He cannot fly, but he can force steam to his service, and pass rapidly from place to place: he is not ubiquitous, but can speak from a distance of hundreds, if not thousands, of miles: he has only one pair of hands, but can save and perform an immensity of Herculean labour by the construction and use of machinery: by means of instruments he can overcome the limitations of his eyesight, and perhaps of his hearing: and every sense he has can be complemented by sensitive elements under his control.

We are being told that it is an open question whether we have been right in speaking of only five senses: sense of weight and sense of heat are added, others are in question. Scientific investigation is diligently and intelligently at work examining many mysterious and ambiguous psychic experiences, and our possible control over them, and adaptability of our organism to them and their laws. Practical possibilities in the world of scientific experiment and discovery, which, a generation

ago, would have been voted wild fairy tales and the dreams of magic, are now gravely spoken of and discussed. The photographic camera alone is giving us strange promises of revelation in dark places. The thoughts of the people are widening to a more universal outlook than has been hitherto attained. If the body, in its animal aspect and structure, seems arrested in some particulars, the brain—*mens*, the instrument of the soul—is not, but seems, on the contrary, to be showing signs of a marvellous advance, ever compelling a new environment and fresh conditions whereunto man is called, and will be called, more and more to adapt himself.

The tremendous and daring words of Schelling come to us at such a crisis with peculiar aptness: "Man becomes greater in proportion as he learns to know himself and his faculty. Let him once become conscious of what he is, and he will soon learn to be what he should." Precisely. The Ideal Man is always within his actual possibility. To perceive the limits is the first step toward passing beyond them. Whilst for the thought of advance for man as Man, there is, to those who care to receive it and value the words as an utterance of power, a warrant for the highest dreams of humanity—a warrant of unmeasured authority, in the mysterious statement that, "All things, whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall receive them."

But we must remember that in some respects there are signs of the body deteriorating under the enervating life of our civilisation, and the very resources which man has invented to supplement his imperfect senses. Our senses in many ways are not as acute as those of the savage and the Red Indian. Our powers of bodily endurance, strength, and skill are scarcely as great as they appear to have been in simpler ages. Degeneration, we are informed, is busy around us in our race. On the other hand, it is allowed that the average of life is greater than it was. Certain ravages of disease are mitigated, whilst others threaten an increase. The general well-being of the community in civilised countries advances, but, under the pressure and hurry of modern life, nervous illnesses are alarmingly prevalent, and the madhouses give startling statistics.

Such facts—some arguing advance of sanity, and others an advance of degeneration—may, if such be the bent of the mind, be taken as proving the perpetual presence of a great mass of suffering—evil—call it what we may. The mass may be shifted, it would be reasoned, but the burden remains, with simply a question as to how and where it is distributed. But all such views seem to arise from narrowness of outlook and vision. The tremendous cycles of evolution are not sufficiently remembered, or the infinite possibilities of universal Nature sufficiently honoured in such considerations. Without

discrediting the theory of averages, one may reasonably point out that it, and every like theory, is built on a survey that does not extend beyond a small area of our age and civilisation—a survey that is little more, in any large sense, than local and temporary. The theories thus evolved are practically useful for to-day, but are quite insufficient and inadequate to be quoted as serious arguments against principles and possibilities which in their very nature and aim transcend the ordinary limits of time and place. Those people who refuse to accept the idea of Man evolving a higher organism than he now possesses, usually limit their arguments, both in thought and outlook, so to speak, to the history of a yesterday and the probabilities of a to-morrow.

The cycles to which the mystic looks trend far back, even beyond the aeons claimed by the geologist, and far ahead of the periods that are usually hinted at in the teaching of theology. Yet he holds no depressingly cheerful views of the Perfectibility of the Human Race, since he is willing to believe that humanity has seen, and will see, many Races and "Families" in the Evolution of its mysterious planetary cycles.<sup>1</sup> Beyond question, science affords him specimens of wondrous evolution, which go to justify his theory, not indeed with proof, but with striking analogy and startling example. The man of science surely should be the last person in the

<sup>1</sup> See page 102.

world ever to affirm evolution—even of the astounding and miraculous kind—is impossible. That science also gives facts which are antagonistic to any such possibilities is but to be expected, since advance of any kind is never an easy or undisputed path. And although theological dogma may pronounce any such ideas as dangerous, theology itself can scarcely call them irreligious or impossible, since it must accept what is called the “miraculous” element, and the statement that certain human lives have touched and gained superhuman powers; nor can it ignore the mysteries with which our Scriptures begin and end,—mysteries which surely point to humanity as having once seen higher races than it now holds, and as capable of attaining a state of higher development and spiritual power.

If the triumphs of faith-healing lie within the potentialities of Nature (and who will prove they do not?), our race may yet conquer sickness and disease. It is an indisputable fact that the root idea of faith-healing spreads around us in these days in a very striking way. I think it is only ignorance or prejudice which laughs at it. Its failures, no doubt, are numerous. But are not these, in great measure, the results of a mistaken point of attack, and a radically wrong method? Is it not selfishness which generally implores its aid,—selfishness under one or other of its many disguises? The invalid often seeks it with an entire misconception of its

plan of Cause and Effect, and finding that it asks for what selfish fear of illness and death, or selfish desire for the liberty and the licence of health, can never bring to it, he retires disgusted, and pronounces the system a foolish and impracticable dream. But it is neither. It is the realisation of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. That proverbial phrase has been accepted by every system, it is true; but it will be granted that the application has generally been somewhat that of placing the horse at the back of the cart. The *corpus sanum* has been, as a rule, the point aimed at—a healthful and natural development of the frame, and a love of outdoor pursuits, whereby it seems to have been inferred—and with some show of reason—that the sanity of the *mens* would be probably secured.

The drawback and weakness of this inverted application is, however, that if the body happens to be an imperfect or poor vessel, or if it falls somewhat into dilapidation and conditions of *insanity*, it seems to be a bad look out for the indwelling *mens*. For if the health of the body be held to be perceptibly instrumental in producing a healthy inward constitution, what is to be consequent on a reversal of that condition? It would seem to be the safer and wiser method to secure the sanity of the inward state, and believe that *it* is the true transfiguring power. The Latin proverb gives this order, and this it is which is most surely meant. It is

curious that a Christian community should ever have accepted any other interpretation of the words. But it has turned them upside down, and daringly declared the sense still stands erect. It will at once be apparent, however, that this inversion is a very important one. We have thus got hold of the stick by the wrong end. *Mens sana in corpore sano* suggests in reality a thought which is the exact reverse of its received application. It cuts at the very root of many of our scholastic ideas, and alters our conceptions of health and disease.

The pathology of disease has had a noble ideal, and has worked at it nobly. But it is founded more on the notion of fighting the darkness of disease than of dissipating it by pouring in the light. Doubtless this may be considered the *crux* for all education and government of every kind, social, physical, moral, and spiritual. It would seem the wiser course to bring in the light than to battle with the darkness. It is, however, noticeable that more and more every year our doctors emphasise nursing, congenial and befitting surroundings, general "treatment," keeping up the spirits, &c., as more important than the assimilation of drugs. The day of the pill and the potion is, we will hope, no longer at its meridian. A distinctly new spirit is creeping into our schools of medicine. Some of the truths of faith-healing, under academic names, are obtaining even with

the most orthodox. Professor Charcot called faith-healing "an ideal method, since it often attains its ends when all other means have failed." The central idea of the system is a true evangel. It is as yet but little realised, but its roots are spreading. It seems difficult at the outset for people to perceive that the very essence of it lies in the understanding that its results are only accorded to a great and vital inward longing for sanity for its own sake, and all that it means—to an intense desire for health, wholeness, holiness—to these, and to these alone; and never for a moment to any wild craving for mere personal well-being, or because illness is painful and wearisome. "Health" was once used as a synonym for salvation. That excellent savour of meaning should be remembered. Faith-healing would be understood in that memory.

Then, too, people have not yet got over the expectation of something miraculous, something swift of operation, an easy way out of difficulties. This is their conception of faith-healing. Miraculous, even magical in the true sense, it is; but only as "the world is one big miracle," as birth and growth are miraculous, and in the sense in which Paracelsus pronounced Thought to be the only magic he knew.

It is curious that the world has so little realised the idea. It is no new thing. "To be able to perceive the good, to desire it, and hope for it, is the means of reaching it," is a saying attributed

to Hermes Trismegistus. Socrates, in the “Charmides” of Plato, tells us, “Such, Charmides, is the nature of the charm which I learned from one of the physicians of the Thracian king, Zamolxis, when serving with the army. He was one of those who are said to give immortality. This Thracian told me that in these notions of theirs, the Greek physicians are *quite right as far as they go*; but Zamolxis, he added, our king, who is also a god, says further, ‘that as you ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head, or the head without the eyes, so neither ought you to attempt to cure the body without the soul; and this,’ he said, ‘is the reason why the cure of so many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they are ignorant of the whole, which ought to be studied also; for the part can never be well unless the whole is well.’ For all good and evil, whether in the body or in human nature, *originates*, as he declared, *in the soul, and overflows from thence*. And therefore, if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul; that is the first thing. . . . ‘*For this*,’ he said, ‘*is the great error of our day in the treatment of the human body, that physicians separate the soul from the body.*’”

It would be difficult to state the case more plainly. Many of the fathers of the Christian Church plainly show that they held this thought

as existent in the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. St. Augustine says, "If we follow our Healer, we must needs leave our sins *and our diseases* behind us." This is evidently based on the words, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities and who healeth all thy diseases." We cannot but note that, in Judæa of old, according to the Gospel narratives, the great Healer to whom St. Augustine referred, in working what are called his miracles, always appeared to measure the healing to be received, not by the positive power administered from without, but by the negative operation of faith which heard the Word from within. "*According to your faith be it unto you,*" and "*Thy faith hath made thee whole,*" might be taken as the formulas of the cause and of the effect of all the miracles of Galilee. If the same Divine sentence be passed on man as a race, his faith alone need mark the limit to the sanity and power he may gain and attract unto himself from the infinite health and life that are symbolised to us in the Name of God.

Nor should the time that has passed and is now passing seem a delay that need make the heart sick. For, in the true vision of time, such periods, we have constantly to remind ourselves, are the thousand years that are as a day. When we remember the enormous cycles of evolution, we have no cause for wonder if the higher evolutions be measured by a calendar as great, and even greater.

"We have only to reflect on the unnumbered ages required for evolution, inorganic and organic, to attain the present stage of development, to be assured that if the super-organic evolution be indeed a continuance of that vast chain, it too will be the work, not of years, nor of hundreds, nor of thousands of years, but of time incalculable."<sup>1</sup> Should we not rather feel joy and exultation that the sign and hope of advance is in ever so slight degree apparent, than depression at its slow progress? Slight or great, slow or quick, are words of but relative meaning. The matter is proved at the first step taken. The rest is but a question of time, and time is nothing in such a race. If the line can be passed—the door opened—the word given and received—all else is but an after-result. The new environment is there. The advance is still ours.

## III

A thought that has taken root is like a living plant, and plant-like will grow. Possibly nothing is so great in its silent, unseen force. It can transform and transfigure a body in a way not given to any power from without. It can elevate and it can degrade a man in answer to its own level. It can write itself with plain yet mysterious character on the countenance, and speak in the very lines and

<sup>1</sup> E. M. Caillard, "Progressive Revelation."

motions of the body. It is scarcely too much to say that every man and woman is in reality a living and visible thought. Sometimes the thought is discernible at a glance. The impress is unmistakable. A base thought may occasionally forge a higher thought's signature, it is true, but it is generally detectable before long. Some people have a rare power of perception in the matter of the incarnated thought in a man or woman. They are natural experts at that spirit-writing.

But we may all gain a good power of such reading. It is questionable whether there is not an unavoidable sentence of truthfulness passed on man in this matter. Willy-nilly, he surely expresses outwardly—could we but read it aright—the dominating thought of the world within him. That the life of the man is ruled thereby, no one will question. The thoughts of religion must be confessed, even by those who have no personal acceptance of them, to be vital in their power, both creative and motive, over the man in whom they are rooted: a power no more to be explained away or belittled than any of the great forces of the world. Could the vitality, the magic, and glory of these great religious thoughts, then, become universally felt and received, who can doubt that a certain measure of transfiguration of humanity would follow, just as it follows in the individual case? Alas! such a possibility appears Utopian, since by some mys-

terious but continuous law of the world the masses of mankind have not within themselves the soil and atmosphere, so to speak, in which great religious ideas can alone take root and grow.

If, however—in the dawning and daily advancing belief that there is no real bar between matter and spirit, and that all is in origin and end, spiritual—the vitality, the magic, and glory, which have hitherto been too often supposed by the world at large to be the exclusive characteristics of a certain section of thought called Religion, should be found more and more to be characteristic of *all* life and being, from lowest to highest, it surely would follow as a natural sequence that a great glory of exaltation would dignify the soul of man, and the body of man would soon begin to express the inward glorification. A change in the inward structure must inevitably in time express itself outwardly.

Philosophers have often recognised the illuminating and transforming power of holy thoughts and a wide outlook into the universe. Marcus Aurelius has a striking sentence on this, which sounds almost modern in its scientific view of things. He says: “Consider the course of the stars as if you were driving through the sky with them. Let the transmutation of the elements be frequently the subject of your meditations.” This reads almost like one of M. Flammarion’s sentences. He, too, is very hopeful of what the effect on mankind would be

could they but enter into what he calls the Uranian life—the life of Thought that opens out to one who reads the starry skies as a book. He becomes prophetic. “When men know something of the earth, and understand the modest position of our planet in infinity; when they appreciate better the grandeur and beauty of Nature, they will be fools no longer, as coarse on the one hand as credulous on the other; but they will live at peace, in the fertile study of Truth, in the contemplation of the Beautiful, in the practice of God, in the progressive development of the reason, and the noble exercise of the higher faculties of intelligence.”<sup>1</sup>

This may seem to some over-hopeful: if so, we may well substitute that word in which there is so much virtue—if—for the *when*, and place the future into the conditional. The truth involved stands unaffected. The position is a logical one, however unlikely its realisation may seem to us. The reception of the great truths he names would surely have the effect he predicates. We perceive that the truly philosophic and truly scientific, as well as the truly religious mind, moves on a level whereon half the thoughts and events which absorb the lives and convulse the energies of other men lose their power and their temptation. The Uranian life is an attainable one, though it may be desired and attained but by few. That its influence would

<sup>1</sup> “The Earth in the Sky.”

work for the higher development of mankind, could it be generally received, is but a natural supposition. The astronomer I have already quoted begins one of his lectures by bidding his listeners look upon themselves "not as denizens of the earth, but as citizens of the heavens." The invocation is certainly a striking one. Such a thought, were it thoroughly believed and realised by the world, must surely have an ennobling effect on the mind ; and that, in due time, must as surely make the body a sharer in its nobility.

To the mere materialist the great messages of science possibly bring but so many warrants for the tenure of his position. To the conventionally religious-minded man, who separates the Creator from his creation, the widening of the universe only takes his God farther and farther away from him. But to the man who perceives in Matter and Spirit one mystic Unity, every step that science makes onward takes him rejoicing on his way. There are words of Pythagoras which might be quoted in a scientific application to-day relative to the arrest of the body, and the vast environment of our earth which science has proclaimed : "In leaving behind the gross body, thou shalt pass into the free ethereal spaces, and thou shalt become a demigod." The real meanings of the passage lie deeper than any scientific outlook, but even read thus it may have its fulfilment. The realisation

of our citizenship with the universe is an idea that has often presented itself to thoughtful minds in all ages, and has brought with it the bright sense of enfranchisement and of companionship that must be its inevitable result in a mind attuned to receive it. Sometimes the thought has been almost humorously expressed. "You care nothing for your country," was said to Anaxagoras. "I care for it very much indeed," was his reply, and pointing to the stars, he added, "My country is there."

Thoreau, the man who approached the personally philosophic ideal more nearly than any of his contemporaries, was once asked if he did not feel lonely living by himself in his hut in the woods. "Lonely!" he wrote in answer, "why should I feel lonely? Is not our planet in the Milky Way?" A faith that is deep can afford to laugh over its own profundity. The companionship and social advantages of the Milky Way must be owned to be a far stretch for the Uranian life on earth. But in its humour there lies a bright truth, and in its exaggerated phrase a prophecy. Nor, as it appears to me, at least, can the words of science, which might seem to depress and overawe the mind, affect the uplifting and illuminating influence which this sense of universal interest and environment opens out to our view. The message of a chilling earth and a dying sun,—of worlds of unimaginable storm and elemental energy,—of a solar system that in the course of æons will

be, as it were, cast into the mighty crucible to be perhaps reconstructed *ad infinitum*, — the infinitesimal littleness of one human life in the great cycles of evolution and “the vastnesses of space,” — all these things seem but a part of that majestic inheritance to which the spirit lays claim. For the creature Man, indeed, who is arrested in his animal course upward, these messages drive home the sense of doom. But

“As when one layeth  
 His worn-out robes away,  
 And, taking new ones, sayeth,  
 ‘These will I wear to-day ;’  
 So putteth by the spirit  
 Lightly its garb of flesh,  
 And passeth to inherit  
 A residence afresh.”<sup>1</sup>

And for such an one, to whom the body is as a garment, — a garment that changes its fashion, and might even be wrought into ever-richer robes, — all these facts are so many doors and avenues of splendour through which he passes up and out from the cramping conditions of an arrested body ; for he has touched a point from which, though he

“. . . Shrivet at the thought of God, of Time, and Space, and Death,”

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Edwin Arnold’s translation of the *Bagavadgita*.

yet he can say :

“ . . . I, turning, call to thee, O soul, thou actual me,  
And lo ! thou gently masterest the orbs,  
Thou mest time, smilest content at death,  
And fillest, swellest full, the vastnesses of space.”<sup>1</sup>

Would not the heart-whole and world-wide reception by mankind of such aspiring and inspiring thoughts be the signal for the spiritual utterance of an imperative and unchallenged word of advance ? It may be foolish to dream of the probability of such a reception. It would be much more foolish surely to doubt its result.

#### IV

To turn from such a contemplation to the remembrance of the present degradation and misery of the world at large is for a moment to face such a fall into darkness as renders the foregoing speculations merely the high-flown dream of those who live in the clouds and not on the substantial earth ; of those who, in conjuring up a vision of an ideal man, ignore the presence of the actual man who lives and moves and has his being in the world to-day. It is, doubtless, a difficult thing to preserve a due balance in such speculations and lines of thought. To forget what Is in visions of what Might be and May be, is clearly a grave mistake, all the more serious from its frequency. And yet, on the other hand, to turn

<sup>1</sup> Walt Whitman, “ Passage to India.”

from a thought which may touch some disregarded truth, because it is, or seems to be, far removed from the things we call facts (which are in reality but the passing phantoms of time and place), were an even graver mistake. The grim and well-nigh overwhelming "facts" of life are neither forgotten nor despised in any true thought, however transcendental; and it is indisputable that the thought which has influenced and moulded those same "facts" of life in the greatest and most lasting degree has not been that of the utilitarian, the practical worker, or the man of common sense, but that of the transcendentalist. The seer whose vision has pierced through facts and things seen to the possibilities of human nature and the things unseen, is the man who has done most for the world. This rule holds good even in science, which professes to deal only with facts. As the author of "Regeneration" well puts it, "It is the imaginative strength of the scientist which renders him a pioneer and a discoverer, and without it he is to his science what the performer of music who cannot compose is to music." We will not fear to take the highest possibilities that can be announced to Man, nor call them impracticable because his present condition seems so far removed from them. The first step out of that condition is the admission that it is not final. "We are near waking when we dream that we dream."

But even supposing that advance be open to Man

in his bodily constitution, one may well pause to ask if the present point of animal perfection which is implied in the thesis of the arrest of the body must be realised individually as well as typically, before further advance for the race can be instituted?

It is evident that although theoretically and in structure the typical body of man is held to be in a high state of perfection, the average number of individual instances are far from personal realisation of that state. Is it necessary that universal perfection of the body as it is should be effected before the onward step, granting it is open, can be made? Such a consummation, however "devoutly to be wished," could hardly be entertained even in the brightest dreams of hope. Nor does it seem to have been thus that human evolution initiates and works itself out. The Promised Land is reached by a nation that is led by a great leader, an initiate of the mysteries, and a man of God. The nation itself may be one of emancipated slaves, not yet wholly freed from idolatry. It is the inward eye of their leader that sees the goal ahead, and from captivity, through the deep sea and across the wilderness, leads the people to their destined end and place. He describes their "own country" and their true habitation far away and ahead of them. The conquering army sweeps on, but it is not because each man in its ranks is a personal victor. The victories are planned and

accomplished by the general and the captains of the host. Thus the advance may be made. The cycles of human evolution may be larger than we realise. Each race, each sub-race, may have to climb its ladder toward perfection, and then pass away, leaving only those who stand on the topmost rung. All these "advanced ones" may work the force that in some future time amalgamates and carries on the evolutionary purpose. We see indeed that on the inner plane of ideas they do so. The great teachers and thinkers are, and always have been, a united and ever-living influence continually shaping Man. "This idea of *rational development*, which forms a far broader and safer basis than that of *natural development*, is the vital principle in the study of the human mind, quite as much, if not more than in the study of Nature. A study of language, of mythology, of religion, and philosophy, which does not rest on the principle of development, does not deserve the name of a science."<sup>1</sup> Possibly the drawing together of the nations, the inter-communication, and the annihilation of distance and difference of speech, may open the way for these "elect" to make a definite advance on the material plane—in answer to that on the spiritual—toward the higher developments of the race. It is not necessary, it would seem, then, that the typical perfection of the body should become

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, translator's preface to "Kant's Critique of Pure Reason."

a universal personal realisation in all its beauty and health before the arrest should once more pass into advance. If the great leaders of thought point that way, the world will follow.

The devoted men and women who give their lives to help the poor and the suffering, who toil in the streets and slums of our great cities, in the cottages of country labourers, and the smoke-darkened homes of miners and factory "hands," the doctors and the parsons who face the physical degeneration and disease, the spiritual atrophy and inversion of thousands of their fellow-creatures, must often find it difficult to realise that Nature is held to have perfected her work in Man. The thought would even seem sometimes to add a grim and sardonic irony to the dreary and sordid imperfection, the gross and humiliating degradation, seen on every side. To credit Nature with such work may at the moment seem to some of us to prove an indictment of mere ruthless and cold indifference against her—

"So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life!"

But any one who wishes to see truly and with real sight must look deeper than all appearances. The appearances, in fact, are not themselves seen truly unless the vision penetrates them and sees beyond. It has been the sublime mission of religion in all ages to enable man to do this, and in doing it to

touch the reality. No voice that the world has heard has given a grander consecration to Man as he is, suffering and degraded, or a grander call to Man as he might be, perfect and regenerate, than that of the Christ when He said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto *one of the least of these, My brethren*, ye have done it *unto Me*.” Man is helped on toward his Divine Ideal by showing noble offices and tender charities to those who seem furthest from its realisation.

But it is also to be helped on, and even more, by those who remember that the same lips gave to us the sublimest, the most illimitable ideal for man that has ever been held up before his eyes—an ideal that requires courage even to listen to in its full meaning, and greater courage still to repeat as a permitted hope. “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Science may tell us that Man is perfected, and can go no further. We refuse to believe it, even for the body. He may have adapted himself to the utmost to the environment that science has taken count of; but his environment is far greater and vaster than that of the physical and material world. If the great words of Jesus of Nazareth are true, true on all planes, as such words of such a speaker must ever be, an ideal for the whole entity of man is proclaimed in them, nothing short of perfection. The crisis which science sees in the arrest of the

body can be no bar to this advance. It must be a step toward it—the recognition of the point where the physical becomes the psychical—the nativity which can make the Son of Man the Son of God. The environment which lies open to this man regenerate is as vast as the ideal that lies before him. This environment is not a “spiritual” matter merely, but universal; not of the “soul” alone, but of body, mind, soul, and spirit; not of “heaven” only, but of earth as well; not of “eternity” and a beyond, but of time and here.

Are there then any signs of the perception of this line of advance for man in the world around us, apart from the received aspirations and too little realised teaching of religion? The existence of a possibility is nothing, so to speak, without the will to work it. “Will is the immanent principle of the universe.”<sup>1</sup> If man once realises his present state, and has faith in what the great ones of the world have told him, and will put it into action, the advance surely lies before him. In the past—and most of all in the far past—there seem to have been individual cases of the faith received and the will exercised into triumphant expression. But a large section of the modern world—not wholly omitting a certain section of the religious world also—gazes with questioning eyes on the record of these individual cases, and passes them by in silence or

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Plumptre on Schopenhauer, “History of Pantheism.”

annotates the record with discrediting words. But if the cases were true, then the possibility they represent is a real one and lies open to all. The words that ring through the ages attest that possibility. Is the world listening more and more to the words? Is the interest in such questions, the sense of expectancy, the strange pulse of spiritual thought around us, a sign of reawakening consciousness? Is "the longing of a soul the prophecy of its fulfilment"?<sup>1</sup> After the night of the Dark Ages, and that darkest hour before the dawn, the reign of materialism and denial, are there any signs of the coming light?

The dawn may be so slight that it may seem but a lessening of the darkness. The first signs of life are very minute, often undiscernible, or, if discernible, undistinguished by any adequate seal or sign of its destiny and heritage. Perhaps at present it is only in material and everyday things that the signs, if any, are shadowed. But we must not, therefore, despise them. The world has always wondered that the teacher comes from its Nazareth, and was born amongst the animals. The voices which may be taken as preluding the possible advance for man come, as has been pointed out, from hard material science on the one hand, and on the other from disregarded, and often disapproved of, subjects of inquiry, and lines of thought that are open to the charge of leading

<sup>1</sup> Emerson.

to regions of fancy rather than that of fact. But to some of us the voices have a harmony. Even in the very fact that science recognises a physical arrest of the body there is hope.

“. . . O wind,  
If winter comes, can spring be far behind ?”



THE  
LOST RICHES OF THE WORLD

“Losses are comparative : only imagination makes them of any moment.”—PASCAL.

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear :  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”—GRAY.

“Le grand secret de la vie est la permanence des forces et la mutation de la matière.”—FLOURENS.

“And I will cause the music of thy songs to cease : and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee like the top of a rock ; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon.”—EZEKIEL xxvi. 13.

## V

## THE LOST RICHES OF THE WORLD

THE historian, searching the records of the past, must surely find few chronicles that are more stirring to the imagination than those which tell of the loss of riches which the world has amassed, be they riches of art, of thought, or of mere wealth. The mind regards all such tales with a wistful and questioning interest. The thought instantly suggests itself that for every such record there must be an unwritten page of unrecorded loss. "The world knows nothing of its greatest men," says Sir Henry Taylor's *Van Artevelde*. Perhaps it is equally true that the world knows nothing of its greatest losses. Civilisation has been called a vast palimpsest. The written character we read to-day is but inscribed on and over a dozen layers of hieroglyph, dimly deciphered, faded clean away, or erased to make the parchment clear for the present legend. The crowded and illimitable retrospect, the penetrating

pathos, the strange indifference of life and nature, opened out to us in the thought of the lost riches of the world, rise to a picturesqueness so manifold and a drama so imperative, that, even to the most commonplace and unimaginative mind, the pictures are vivid and the poem is obvious. One need but point in silence. The gorgeous tragedy unrolls itself at once to eye and ear.

Imagination stretches the record of loss beyond the pages of accredited history, and we feel that its voice is true and just when it whispers to us of the passing away, in decay or violence, of civilisations whereof we catch but the dimmest shadows,—of wisdom and riches and beauty in the mythic dawn of our race, all lost and forgotten before the world began to tread what are now, to us, the remotest vistas of the past. What was that sunken continent, the lost Atlantis, with its unknown wisdom and too presumptuous pride of glory? What were the kingdoms and riches of the Pre-Adamite Soldans? Whence came the lovely tales and legends of a golden age—floating echoes of an Edenic state—which haunt the world? Man never yet invented a story, it is said. All such legends—far-off myths—must have a nucleus of reality. In such a field of thought imagination has a right of way, and he whose mind is most richly stored with the records of known history will surely (unless he be of the dry-as-dust school) most readily grant that imagination is not likely to outstep probability.

The lost riches of the world! Even the tales known to every schoolboy are full of suggestion and wonder. The very names of the great cities of old seem to hold secrets of splendour and pageantry, wisdom and drama. We long for an evocation to make them yield up what they could tell of riches lost in the crumbling ruin of time.

“Where is Thebes, in all her glory with her gates of beaten gold ?

Where Syené, and that marvel, Heliopolis of old ?”<sup>1</sup>

“Where are the cities of the plain ?

And where the shrine of rapt Bethel ?

And Culah, built of Tubal Cain ?

And Shinar, whence King Amraphel

Came out in arms, and fought and fell ?

And where is Karnac, that great fane

With granite wrought, a miracle ?

And Luxor, smooth, without a stain,

Whose graven scriptures now we spell ?

Where are the cities of old time ?”<sup>2</sup>

Babylon the great,—Nineveh,—Tyre and Sidon,—Athens,—Persepolis,—Carthage,—Palmyra,—Jerusalein :—“How are the mighty fallen !” The pictures rise one over the other and pass quickly before us. Then, what mean those monuments of lost civilisations? The Nagkon-Wat in Cambodia: who built it? And those stately ruins in Central America, the temples at Palenque and Uximal, ruins of a race that had perished before the Aztec rose to power: no one knows their origin or their builders.

<sup>1</sup> Matilda Blind.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Gosse.

The history of Rome alone gives us page after page of treasure destroyed and lost. Part of the Nibelungen hoard that was amassed there was indeed carried away, diverted into other channels, and doubtless enriches the world to-day. But much was lost. Fire and flood had their way of it: the earth buried it deep, with shattered column and fallen architrave: statues, jewels, gold more plentiful than Solomon drew from the unknown Ophir of the south; spoil brought to Rome in many a triumph; wealth gathered by her strong hands of dominion from every corner of the then known world. Heaps of treasure, it is said, were thrown into the "yellow Tiber," to be washed out to sea, or drowned deep in its silt and mud. The seven-branched candlestick and the golden table brought by Titus from Jerusalem (if indeed they were veritable parts of the sacred furniture of the Temple<sup>1)</sup>) were borne off by Genseric to Carthage

<sup>1)</sup> It has been considered to be scarcely probable that the golden candlestick brought by Titus from Jerusalem was the veritable seven-branched candlestick from the Temple. The Jews, zealously reverent of everything connected with the sacred precincts, would surely not have left it to be looted by the victorious army. From pictures we know that marine monsters were represented in the ornamentation of the candlestick brought to Rome; and such symbolism would seem to prove that it could not have been in the Jewish sanctuary. The tradition that it was flung into the Tiber is unsupported by any historic record. Procopius, an authority often quoted by Gibbon, tells us that after the candlestick was placed at Constantinople, Justinian regarded it with dread as a desecration, and sent it to the Christian Church at Jerusalem. That seems to be the latest record of its fate, as far as I can ascertain.

(A.D. 455), only to be brought back by Belisarius (A.D. 535) when Carthage was recovered from the Vandals, and placed subsequently in a church at Byzantium. Tradition and history differ in the accounts given of their fate, but both alike attest their loss. Masterpieces of Praxiteles and Skopas<sup>1</sup> which were brought to adorn Rome fell a prey to its flames during the reigns of Claudius,<sup>2</sup> Nero, and Titus, or were mutilated and destroyed when Caligula<sup>3</sup> wore the purple. The historic sea must hide vast store of wealth beneath its waters. It has seen nations and empires come and go, and pass away on tides more fluctuating than any it knows. Priceless cargoes surely lie there "full six fathoms

<sup>1</sup> "In Bithynia was originally one of Skopas' great works, which was taken to Rome about B.C. 30."—MITCHELL'S *History of Ancient Sculpture*.

"Of an Aries, removed from Asia Minor to Rome about B.C. 133, we only know that the God of War . . . occupied the same temple as a nude Aphrodite by the same master (Skopas)."—*Ibid.*

"Skopas' famous Apollo was placed by Augustus in the Palatine temple. . . . His Achilles group stood in the Domitian shrine in the Flaminian Circus. In a temple of Apollo at Rome was the group representing the slaughter of the daughters of Niobe, ascribed to both Praxiteles and Skopas."—PERRY'S *Greek and Roman Sculpture*.

<sup>2</sup> "Of a bronze Aphrodite . . . we only know that, with other works of Praxiteles, it was consumed by fire in Claudius' reign."—MITCHELL'S *History of Ancient Sculpture*.

"A famous statue of Eros by Praxiteles was placed by Nero in the portico of Octavia in Rome. During the reign of Titus it fell, with the portico, a prey to the flames."—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "Countless gems (of sculpture) were mutilated and destroyed in the reigns of Caligula and Nero."—PERRY'S *Greek and Roman Sculpture*.

deep." The illustrious and beautiful cities whose feet have been set high on its rocky shores, or have been washed by its blue waves, must have bequeathed some of their riches to its deep keeping.

" . . . Old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the waves' intenser day,  
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers." . . .

Who can now tell all the glories and pomp of Dido's Carthage? Cleopatra found her Egypt possessing but a tithe of its ancient magnificence under the Pharaohs and the Hyksos; yet Shakespeare sings her splendour in his most sumptuous phrase. When Alaric the Goth died, his wild Northmen turned a river from its course; they set their hero-king upright on his horse in the dried river-bed; they surrounded him with slain slaves and heaped-up treasure, that he might enter Valhalla worthily and with befitting state; and then they turned the river back again into its proper channel. Where are all the wonderful things found in the Gothic palace at Narbonne—"tables of solid emerald, the missorium, a dish 2500 lbs. weight, covered with all the gems of India"?<sup>1</sup> Sarcophagus and sepulchre, Egyptian pyramid and Etruscan urn, may have been the receptacles of rich regalias. The dead hand has not always left its hoarded wealth for others to use. The discrowned brow has sometimes taken its

<sup>1</sup> Charles Kingsley, "The Roman and the Teuton."

diadem with it, at least into the world of darkness and oblivion. From Alexandria the flames of the burning of the great library seem to wave a beacon that is answered later on by the flames of the holocausts lit by Savonarola in the streets of Florence. The soil of our own land may still cover hidden treasure. When the

“Conquerors from the eastward,  
Lords by land and sea,”

poured into Britain after the Roman occupation, there must have been a wild time of loss and destruction. Shattered pavements of Roman villas and pots of coins have been found, to speak of the scenes that marked that period of devastation. In the Fen country, the rich Abbey of the Golden Borough was sacked and burnt by the Danes and Northmen. The Reformation and the great Civil War doubtless added to the store of buried plate and jewels. It is perhaps scarcely to be expected that England would care to listen to the plain and unvarnished tale of the destruction of valuable and beautiful things that has gone on since Europe began to loot the treasure-houses of the East. Royal and sacred gems and jewels were found and taken, and a hundred hands have no doubt made themselves rich with unscrupulous seizure of the wealth of the conquered races. But how much must have been lost, concealed, practically de-

stroyed, both in wanton triumph by the victors and in fierce defiance by the vanquished.

Then the whole story of the Spanish conquistadores in the New World, does it not read like one long tale of romance—Mexico and Peru—the blood-stained Aztec teocallis, and the glittering stainless Temples of the Sun under the Incas? The fabled wonders of the golden city of Manoa scarcely surpassed the veritable marvels seen by the grim soldiers of Cortez and Pizarro. Vast treasure is said to have been buried or hidden by the priests. Many of the rich galleons bearing the spoil of the Indies and the Spanish Main—jewels and ingots of precious metals—to enrich the coffers of the Most Catholic King, never reached port, but yielded up their treasure on the high seas as toll paid to war, to wind and wave. Are they all tales of romance? Yes; but a romance that history does not deny—a romance that takes us captive at once with its living and varied picturesqueness.

Perhaps there are few places wherein the thought of the lost riches of the world haunts us more persistently than in the galleries and crypts of a great museum such as that wherein the Venus of Milo stands supreme, or where

“the kind of light  
Which London takes the day to be”

falls on the relics of Greece and Nineveh. Between

the lines of the official catalogue we discern another and undecipherable list of works of art and beauty and interest lost in oblivion. The prized and priceless things we see around us seem, after all, and at their best, to be but sticks and stones, rags and shreds, saved from a general ruin. For each object we see, a hundred unseen shadows loom ghostlike on the inner sight. One seems almost to hear the beat and song of the waves which have flung up all this costly wreckage on the shore.

But the world has had losses greater than any such material treasure. He who walks through a museum with thoughtful mind, or muses on the walls or through the streets of some historic city, is tempted to remember but the visible and tangible glories that have passed away, the vanished beauty and splendour of palace and temple. But there are lost riches, perhaps of greater worth, and certainly harder to appraise. The world takes little count of them, yet are they not in truth its truest losses?

First amongst them we may surely count the treasures of thought and the results of science which, in stormy and dark hours of man's history, must have been swept and thrown away. "'Tis frivolous to fix pedantically the date of any particular inventions," says Emerson; "they have all been invented over and over fifty times." Such a thought implies that for each fresh nascent period

of an invention there has been one of forerunning dissolution. "No one can read the history of astronomy," he continues, "without perceiving that Copernicus, Newton, Laplace, are not new men, or a new kind of men, but that Thales, Anaximenes, Hipparchus, Empedocles, Aristarchus, Pythagoras, Ænippodes, had anticipated them." An unprejudiced reader cannot study astronomy without realising this.

In spite of the foolishly patronising tone the modern man of science too often adopts in speaking of the ancients, it is evident to the impartial reader that these same ancients knew a great deal that has been accredited first-hand to modern discovery. Of this I speak in other pages, so I must not repeat the instances; but it must be admitted that we have not even yet got much beyond the truth Pythagoras enunciated when he said that "God worked everywhere by geometry." We cannot honestly doubt that much of the learning and some of the practical resources of science at the command of the builders of the pyramids, and even of the star-gazers of Chaldea and "the plains of Shinar," were lost to the world for centuries. Majestic monuments of immemorial antiquity, built in ways which suggest the possession of means we are apt to think the result of modern thought and skill; the revelations of Egyptian papyrus rolls, and Assyrian and Accadian cylinders, all point to the probability of

knowledge which was subsequently lost, to be re-discovered ages afterwards. There is a proverb that tells us that lost time is never found again. We may hope it is but a half-truth, and that there certainly is a point where it ceases to be true; but certainly the lost time of the Dark Ages seems sad to contemplate, when one thinks what advance might have been made by this time had science and thought in all directions advanced from Alexandria on without a break, instead of meeting that blank dark period of loss during the iron reign of the Middle Ages. "Nearly two thousand years (were) to intervene between Archimedes and Newton, nearly seven hundred between Hipparchus and Kepler. A dismal interval of almost twenty centuries parts Hero, whose first steam-engine revolved in the Serapion, from James Watt, who has revolutionised the industry of the world."<sup>1</sup> This seems a loss of time in truth, and one it is almost impossible at first sight not to regret. We see, too, how hard it is to name what Emerson calls "the indisputable inventor." He goes far afield in suggesting that truth is of immemorial age, and that our names and eras of origin are in reality but names and eras of development. "'Tis hard," he says, "to find the right Homer, Zoroaster, or Menu; harder still to find the Tubal Cain, or Vulcan, or Cadmus." Such names are but an *x*—an unknown human quantity.

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Plumptre, "The History of Pantheism."

It is pretty certain there have been losses in the world of science, discovery, invention ; some of them temporary perhaps, but some of them not yet recovered.

Then we must count another kind of loss in the world, which is even more inscrutable and strange. George Eliot had this in her mind when she put into the mouth of the old musician in "Armgart" the pathetic words :

"Much good seed  
Is wasted in this world. Why not my handful?"

In such waste there seems a callous loss, hard to understand. There is a transparent shallowness of experience and thought in the belief that good work will find its recognition and reward, and that a rude and ready justice rules the world, which does not permit valuable work to be lost. The final justice of life is, doubtless, as perfect as every other law which works out with minute or with immeasurable order the evolution of the universe. This it were a folly to doubt. "'Tis true the working of the gods is slow, but it is sure and strong," was the judgment of the ancient world, and the modern age repeats the sentence :—

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,  
Yet they grind exceeding small ;  
Though He sit and wait in patience,  
With exactness grinds He all."

But the perception of this supreme and exact

justice demands a larger area of sight, as its development demands a larger field of action than we can claim in our human environment, or in the slender span of years that go to make up the tale of one human life. Schiller's dictum may be true, and few will doubt it—"Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht,"—but the acceptance of such a justice as this—as of all Divine laws—is a matter more of prescience than of science, and of faith more than sight. It enters a supernatural and superhuman region where time and place do not exist. Such a star of justice as this gives us no parallax whereby we may measure its distance from our present point of view, though we may truly see it shining with our mortal eyes. But this is a widely-different idea of the matter to that homely and easy-going view of justice which accepts the theory that good work generally receives now and here its due recognition.

There is a complacency about this idea which one instinctively distrusts. Then, too, even the most sanguine of its believers must allow that there are exceptions to the rule. It is impossible not to regard attentively those exceptions. What of them? Where did that handful of good seed go? It is to be feared the exceptions are numerous. Most of us must know of one such case, if not more. Sometimes the reason why the good work is lost is apparent to the onlookers. There is some reason—some "screw loose"—some impracticability of temper; we

perceive that the worker in himself supplies the reason why his work fails. But even then the work in itself, apart from the worker, is none the less good, and none the less lost. Justice, then, is a greater and more impartial thing than can be determined by the mere appraisement of work, of any one factor in any case ; and the worth of work done, it may be, represents but one consideration in a cause that may have many sides to be considered before perfect justice can be worked out. The parable of the Sower is not without its analogy here. Justice ruled the fate of the seed just as much when it was burnt up of the sun in stony places or devoured by the fowls of the air, as when it fell on good ground and brought forth fruit. But it is not said that the seed was lost or wasted. "Waste" is indeed a word of but partial sight, and more than partial ignorance. Yet it is representative of the thought of the world on this point ; and none can deny, in this sense, that "much good seed is wasted in this world."

But there is another and even less computable loss in the regions of thought and art. It lies in those cases wherein we see talent, even genius, sometimes of a very rare and exquisite kind, defeated and broken, as it were, by the lack of a due power of expression, or by a want of physical or mental stamina. There seems no capacity for accepting and making the best of the conditions and possibilities

of life and daily living. Sometimes no doubt the thought is lost because, fine and beautiful as it is, it is not matured; but in other instances it would seem that the thought is not immature, but is too delicate for the materialism of the world it touches. Browning, in his "Rabbi Ben Ezra," well describes such losses, both of immaturity and of over-fineness:—

"But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account ;  
    All instincts immature,  
    All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's  
amount.

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act ;  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;  
    All I could never be,  
    All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher  
shaped."

Such losses may, indeed, seem fantastic and unreal to some, but surely they are nearer to true loss, as far as this world goes, than many of the material things that have been swept from man's possession.

To think, even for a moment, of the innumerable books of all sorts and conditions which are published and poured on the world to-day, makes one almost feel grateful to the inexorable law of loss. The endless making of books might else become a second

tower of Babel. That prolific growth of the modern world, the novel, is almost alarming to contemplate in its amazing fecundity. Work perhaps is never a waste, and is never really lost; nor is the average novel, even in the aggregate of its yearly thousands, so valuable as to justify any serious claim it might advance to be considered as one of the riches of the world. But one is not sorry to believe that the law which preserves the great averages of life will exercise its beneficent if ruthless force on the miles of "copy" and printed page ("I also am under authority!") which are reeled out in every direction around us. But with a different and a graver mind do we turn our eyes to the past, and note the list of lost riches the world chronicles in the great field of literature. There seems a grim irony of fate in the fact that the great conqueror, who, in a drunken frolic, burnt the library of Avestic writings and books at Persepolis, should establish a city whose name to the world at large is connected with no event more intimately than with the burning of its own priceless library.

The volume written by Hermippos on the lost books of Zoroaster is in its turn lost to us, and its name, "On the Magi," alone remains, as quoted by other writers—Diogenes, Plutarch, and Pliny. These names in their turn suggest new losses, and take us into a region of classic literature wherein we know that what we possess is but the jetsam and

flotsam of rich cargoes lost. “Æschylus is said to have composed ninety plays. We possess MSS. of seven only. And what has become of the works of Berosus, Manetho, Sanchoniathon? What of the complete MSS. of Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Dio Cassius? What of Livy and Tacitus?”<sup>1</sup> In India students tell us that the Buddhists constantly speak of and refer to lost books. “In the Old Testament we have the well-known allusions to the Book of Jasher (2 Sam. i. 18), and the Wars of God (Num. xxi. 14), the Chronicles of David, and the Acts of Solomon, which prove the former existence, if not of books, at least of popular songs and legends under those titles. And with regard to the New Testament also, not only does St. Luke tell us that ‘many had taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word,’ but we know that there existed in the early centuries other Gospels and other Epistles which have either been lost or have been declared apocryphal by later authorities.”<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to count up the losses the world has sustained in literature alone.

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Max Müller, “Theosophy and Psychical Religion.”

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## II

From the contemplation of this long category of loss—in which I have, as far as possible, given references and quoted authors whose words have authority—we may well turn to the light that lies shining behind the thought of loss for those who care to see it.

Loss, we find, is unknown in the physical universe. What is called loss is in reality but change, evolution, correlation. No atom can be lost. However it may change its form and association, it can always be brought back to its original form. The thought of the lost riches of the world gains a new aspect in the light of this truth. What we think is lost has in fact assumed other forms. The same living idea may be expressed in many incorporations. Such a theory necessitates that one form should pass away that the new form may be presented :—

“ The old order yieldeth, giving place to new ;  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

Possibly the form of a certain Beauty once known to and treasured by the world—the form it regrets and mourns to-day as “lost”—was not the first by many of the forms assumed by that Beauty, and through which it had spoken to the world. It may even be that the idea, living and working anew into expression, has animated many embodiments

since the day when history records its “loss”; and we, who mourn it as “lost,” may be in possession of its new expression, though we know it not. “The genius that created it now creates somewhat else.”<sup>1</sup> Lost, it cannot be.

“There can never be one lost good.”

Our term of life, short as it is, is sufficiently long, and our outlook on the world, narrow as it may be, is sufficiently wide, for us to see in the fading of the seasonable flowers of the year, in the passing glories of morning, noon, and evening, and in the coming and going of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, no loss of each special beauty, but only a perpetual change and renewal, a Divine order of Nature which we love, and whereby we live and our earth maintains her life. Can we not, therefore, conceive an answering-point of view not so far beyond and above us but that we may have rare and gracious glimpses of it from time to time, wherefrom what we call loss and destruction may seem but as processes of Nature, as absolutely lovely in themselves as they are beneficent in their action? From such a point of view what are the lost riches of the world, and how are we to regard them? Seeing what some of the things were which the world has counted as its riches, the fading and passing away of them may, to this higher vision,

<sup>1</sup> Emerson.

be of incomparably less value and note than the fading and passing away of the field-flowers or the fugitive glories of a sunset. None of them were ever, and at best, more than appearances and phenomena of the time and place.

Nay, in our own lives we realise the changing points of view which growth brings to us; and if we would but follow out the lines of this experience to their logical issue, we should find that they would sap much of the pain and mystery of loss, changing its frowns and tears into a tender smile. Are any losses in all our after-lives more acute in character than those of infancy? Who cannot recall the absolute, almost black despair he felt over some broken or lost toy or plaything, some sharp childish disappointment, the destruction of something of no value to others, but of untold value to us? Such pain is of its kind, and, for its time of duration, complete in its absorption of the whole nature and environment. In our childhood even to contemplate the prospective losses which we are told must come to us is heart-breaking. Our elders tell us we shall have to give up toys and playthings, and such and such childish pursuits; and we ask ourselves how shall we be able to endure life under such starved and incomplete conditions? We look at the grave, tiresome, grown-up people, and their lives seem barren to us, and empty of the joys we know. How shall we bear to be like them? It

will be stupid, it will be terrible. But no! time answers and arranges it all. We are unconscious of the losses we dreaded. We simply change. We care no more for childish things. We do not lose, nor resign; we go beyond. Yet in after-life it seldom occurs to us to remember this fact, to keep it before us as one of the finest explanations for life, and perhaps for death, that we possess. We take our life, after youth, so deadly seriously.

Seldom do we seem relieved and sustained by any suspicion that its troubles, and losses, and heart-breaks, its sense of what is important and vital, all its joys, and successes, and undertakings, are perhaps by no means final, and that there may be—may we even say, there must be?—a point of view, only a little way beyond us, wherefrom they too will all be changed, put aside as childish things. If such a point were reached, all the mature and serious, and, as we now think, important years of our manhood would appear even as our childhood appears to us when we have attained maturity: a part of us still, most truly, vital, germinal, and in a sense imperishable; but transitory also—a time not of loss, but of change. That partly amused, partly pathetic, and wholly tender memory with which we regard the things we thought so all-important in infancy should be one of the most pregnant parables life speaks to us. It is not loss, but progress. It is not the touch of death, but the

sign of life. And it is no very great stretch of the imagination to see that all this, in some way we cannot yet comprehend, may be wrought out in the life of the planet, and man's history thereon, making the lost riches of the world appear but as the toys of childhood to the gaze of maturity.

Amongst the many ideas that are passed about the world in these days—half-humorously, half-earnestly—is that of the existence of an “Astral World.” There is no need to enter, more than superficially, into what is really meant by the words. As an idea it is but little understood, and as an expression it is generally misused. It is enough for the present purpose to point out that the idea is one which opens a wide door of hope in such a subject as the lost riches of the world. Mr. Sinnett, in an article on the astral world in the *Nineteenth Century* for August 1894, tells us that “The astral plane is, to begin with, a phase of Nature as extensive, as richly furnished, as densely populous, as the physical earth. It is in one sense a counterpart presentment of that physical earth under different conditions. There is no natural feature of the earth—no tree, or mountain, or river—there is no artificially constructed feature of the physical earth—no building or manufactured thing of any kind—but has its astral counterpart as certainly as any morsel of magnetised iron has its two poles; and the astral

counterparts of physical objects are often far more persistent in their character than the physical objects themselves, so that when these last may have passed away in the process of decay altogether, the pictures they leave behind them on the astral light (the pervading medium of the astral plane) will remain there for immeasurable periods of time."

In this article we are told that in this astral world is to be found an exact double, so to speak, of everything that is, or that ever has been, or ever can be, in this world of ours—it being at once an exemplar and a shadow. In this mysterious but real world, therefore, can be found all that has been lost in this world—a world certainly as mysterious as it is real. Nor is this idea of a second world interpenetrating ours limited to what is called occult science. Hints of it are to be found in the writings of most poetic and deep thinkers. Indeed it is very curious to notice how often such ideas receive attestation and support from outside witnesses. I will not quote here the deepest, and most striking words that can be put forward to support the idea of this astral world ; but it will be at once recognised how often the thought is traceable in great writers. We may take one instance in the world of well-known fiction. It seems improbable that Charles Dickens was a conscious believer in the astral world. The association seems humorous in its unlikeness. The expression itself is, I take

it, a revival since his day. Yet it would be difficult to find a more perfect description of the astral plane than is given in "A Christmas Carol." Scrooge therein revisits, under the guidance of the spirit of Christmas Past, his own childhood. He sees its scenes in their minutest details. He lives again in its forgotten world. He meets his old schoolboy companions, and breathes the very atmosphere of a certain winter morning which is recalled to him by his ghostly guide. "These are but shadows of things that were," says the spirit; "they have no consciousness of us." Had Charles Dickens been an ardent and confessed believer in the Astral Plane he could not have given a more perfect description of it. Mr. George Du Maurier, in his very beautiful story of "Peter Ibbetson," works out cleverly, though perhaps quite unintentionally, the same thought in a development of dreaming and the possibilities of dreamland. The conception seems to have always floated through the imagination of the world.

It is said to explain many strange tales of magic-mirror and of trance; many instances of psychical experience and of unaccountable knowledge; many ghost stories and records of "coming events" which have "cast their shadow before." I name this, however, but by the way, merely to show how widespread is the idea, in some form or other, or at least how much of what is supposed to be mysterious

might be explained by such a thought. I do not wish to argue for or against the truth of the theory ; but of course it holds, for those who receive it, a very distinct hope and light for the dark mystery of loss.

And it is worthy of note that science is not without an answering line of thought in the existence of what one may call an imperishable memory, not only in the unseen realm of mental phenomena, but actually in the material phenomena of the universe. Experiments in hypnotism have brought to our knowledge the most surprising proofs of the imperishable nature of memory. It would appear that the most trivial and insignificant details of life, and the scenes around us, nay, even things unnoticed at the time, and words heard but not listened to, possibly words not even understood, can be exactly and succinctly reproduced at any moment by a sufficiently recreating force or suggestion.

Man has the right to centre his universe, so to speak, in his own consciousness. It exists for him but in and through himself. "His own soul," we are told, is a measure which, for him, outweighs the world. His individuality is his highest gain and only true possession. It is impossible, therefore, for him sometimes not to count the bright hours of his infancy and youth, the wonderful bequeathments which the past has given him in the inward and the outward life, as his greatest lost riches of the world.

Are there not moments in the experience of us all when the sense of the loss of "the days that are no more" is almost more than we can bear? Memory can perhaps stab us with her smile more poignantly than with her reproach. Tennyson's beautiful lines express the thought of many:—

"Dear as remembered kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned  
On lips that are for others ; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,  
O Death in Life ! the days that are no more !"

A death in life, indeed, such memories are to most people. The threnody sung over that death goes up from the world unceasingly, for the memories are of hours that are accounted dead—gone—passed away never to return. The penetrating pathos of Memory to the world lies in its hopelessness. Religious trust and "the philosophic mind" may teach a man to view calmly, and perhaps not without a certain hope, the shadowy prospects of memory. But, even so, the sense of loss remains. People in sorrow have a jealous reverence for their own secret bitterness, and guard themselves oftentimes, as with a certain delicacy, from any intrusion, even of thought. They shrink from the proffer of attempted consolation or problematic compensation.

But surely in the discovery of the ineffaceable character of memory, the possibility of its living renewal, the gospel of its absolute resurrection from

the tomb of the past, there is a strange, almost an unspeakable hope. Thus there is opened to us a door of unexpected issue, the possible recovery of riches we had indeed accounted lost. There is beauty and comfort, and there is terror and shame in the thought. Through its shadowy portals we discern the possible dawn of a Day of Judgment we may scarcely have reckoned with, and of which we had not dreamed. But there is also dimly discerned a Day of Restitution, an eternal Now, in which what we have called past, present, and future are but one. The parables of Nature are deep and true. In that mysterious world which we call Memory, even as in the mysterious world in which we live, it would appear there is no loss.

The idea carries us on still further. If we interrogate the material universe, we are given the same answer—there is no loss. This message is not limited to such scientific principles as the Indestructibility of Matter, the Correlation of Force, the Conservation of Energy, and all the rest of the old truths under new names. No, it comes to us also from the air we breathe and from the stars we see, and tells us that Nature never forgets, and that, whilst she loses no atom of matter, she also records every event of life. The theory of the Astral World is no whit more wonderful than the theories that are propounded by those who patiently investigate the natural phenomena of the universe and the myste-

rious arcana of Nature. Professor Denton, in his most interesting work, "The Soul of Things," has this statement: "Not a leaf waves, not an insect crawls, not a ripple moves, but each motion is recorded by a thousand faithful scribes and in infallible and indelible scripture. This is just as true of all past time. . . . From the dawn of life upon this infant globe, when round its cradle the steamy curtains hung, to this moment Nature has been busy photographing everything. What a picture-gallery is hers!"

Speaking of light and its use in the modern development of photography, Professor E. Hitchcock says: "It seems that the photographing influence pervades all Nature, nor can we say where it stops. . . . It may be, too, that there are tests by which Nature, more skilful than any photographer, can bring out and fix these portraits, so that acuter senses than ours shall see them as on a vast canvas spread over the material universe." On a part of the subject such as this it is best simply to quote those who speak with authority, and let their words carry the line of thought I wish to present. So I will take two passages which bear exactly on the point, and with rare brilliance. The first is from *Dans le Ciel et sur la Terre*, by Camille Flammarion. It is cast in the form of a conversation, and the subject is treated with that lightness of touch which the French *savant* is never afraid to use—a touch

that is welcome after the more cautious gravity of the English school.

The astronomer and his friend are walking in a garden, and in the course of conversation he says to her:—

“That beautiful star in (the constellation of) the Crown, which our meteor but now appeared to touch, has no sensible parallax. One can believe that the luminous ray which reaches us to-day has been travelling since the commencement of our era. Perhaps it started at the moment when the battle of Actium was raging between the fleets of Octavius and Antony to decide the empire of the world. We really see this star, not as it is in our days, but as it was at the departure of the luminous courier which reaches us. If, from there, some transcendent spirits can distinguish our little earth, they are nineteen centuries behindhand with our history, and can see at this moment Cleopatra reclining amidst the purples of her ship drawing in to the shore, still dazzled by the last glory of the setting sun. In thirty years they might be present at the tragedy of Golgotha, and nineteen centuries hence, if we were ourselves transported to the constellation of the Crown,—above all, were we possessed of sufficient perceptive faculty,—we should have beneath our eyes the earth of to-day, this Europe, this France, these valleys, these woods, and seeing what really exists on this earth, we should in consequence re-see

ourselves, living our real life . . . Yes! we could see ourselves again, without anything intervening, and could follow the whole course of our existence, from the first games of our infancy to our last years. Without doubt for such an experience we must suppose ourselves endowed with an unimaginable power of vision: but do we know all the forces of Nature? After the telegraph, the telephone, spectrum analysis, terrestrial magnetism and human somnambulism, have we the right to close the door on the unknown? Who knows what is slumbering in the problems of the future? Who knows with what senses extra-terrestrial beings may be endowed? The earth is only a floating island in the great celestial archipelago. In the calendar of the universe its whole life will only have lasted a day. Astronomy has killed Death. It is Life, eternal Life, which surrounds us." The second passage is, in essence, but a repetition of this, but in some ways it puts the thought more forcibly and more in sympathy with the subject for which I quote it. It is from *Uranie*. "The light which emanates from all the suns which people immensity, the light reflected into space by all the worlds enlightened by these suns, carries across the infinite heaven the photographs of all the centuries, of all the days, of all the moments. In looking at a star, you see it as it was at the moment when the photograph left which you now receive, in the same way as in listening to a bell

you receive the sound after it has left, and just as long after as you happen to be far away. It follows from this that the history of all the worlds is actually travelling in space without ever absolutely disappearing, and that all past events are present and indestructible in the bosom of the Infinite."

In such a region of thought as is presented to us in these passages, loss is a word that has no meaning.

To any one who perceives and feels the mystery and sorrow of the world, there is perhaps no line of thought so depressing and questionable as a persistent and imperturbable optimism. Leibnitz's famous statement that this is the best of all possible worlds, must seem to many noble people the speech of one who shuts himself up in his study or laboratory, and simply looks at the stars when he walks through the wretched streets of our cities.

There is something measurelessly provoking in having every obvious shadow of natural regret and sorrow explained away with a bland smile and a pit-pat argument. It is, however, in a spirit far removed from this alert and conspicuous confidence that such suggestions as those I have enumerated can be received and accepted. The orbits in which such ideas move are too vast for prospect of immediate circulation or present accomplishment. Indeed, the cycles involved might seem to many almost

more hopeless in their superhuman compass than the unavailing regret which encompasses the ordinary acceptance of loss. The darkness of a mystery may be dissipated by a revelation whose light may be more impenetrable than the forerunning gloom. Yet the difference is none the less beneficent or welcome; for the mystery has become one of light and reason, where aforetime it was one of darkness and hopelessness. The thoughts which can be received and made to brighten the contemplation of the lost riches of the world, and to take the keen regret from all thought of loss, are of no suave and pert complacency, nor do they repeat any trite commonplaces about all being "for the best"; but there is in them something real and cosmic—something which seems to fit in with the great order of Creation and the great scripture of Nature; something which enters our thought-atmosphere with the light and energy of the Sunshine.

THE END

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